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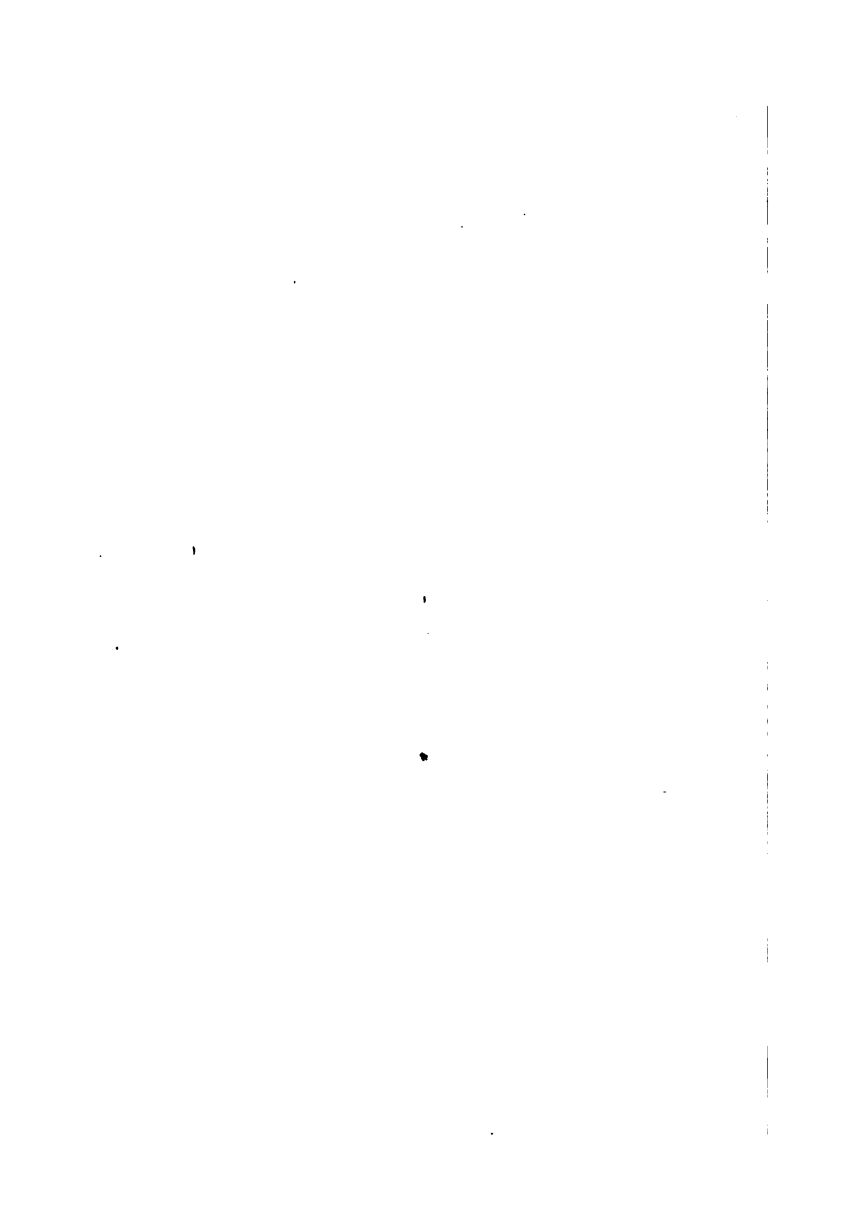


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S. Jones Jr
Wicak Hill
1865

LIVE WHILE YOU LIVE.

BY THE REV.

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&c. &c.

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CONTENTS.

CHAP.	PAGE
I. LIFE A PILGRIMAGE	1
II. LIFE A RACE	32
III. LIFE A CONFLICT	65
IV. LIFE A BLESSING	94
V. LIFE A SEED-TIME FOR ETERNITY	123

DUM VIVIMUS VIVAMUS.

LIVE WHILE YOU LIVE, the Epicure would say,
And seize the pleasures of the present day.*
LIVE WHILE YOU LIVE, the Sacred Preacher cries,
And give to God each moment as it flies.†
Lord, in my views let both united be;
I LIVE IN PLEASURE WHEN I LIVE TO THEE!

DR. DODDRIDGE.

* 1 Cor. xv. 32.

† Eccl. ix. 10.

CHAPTER I.

LIFE A PILGRIMAGE.

LIFE is of all things the most sedulously cherished. And yet to a rational being it is not in living but in living well, that genuine happiness consists. Existence itself can become to us a blessing only so far as the great ends of our existence are recognised, adopted, and kept steadily in view. Life is no random gift of aimless kindness; it is a deposit entrusted to us by the Author of our being, to be improved according to the intention of the Donor; it is the means to be employed by us for the attainment of exalted and far distant ends. To use it rightly therefore we must know those ends. On a just conception of life will depend the right conduct of life. We must have viewed it in its various aspects before we can understand its duties, or enjoy the blessedness which, only in the practice of

those duties, it can yield to us. And hence the earlier name for all true practical wisdom and morality was The Art of Living,—The Science of human life,—The knowledge of the conditions under which we best may realise the ends of our existence.

But no one can set before us the true ends of life so correctly or so fully as He who is the Author of that life. In the light of God's truth alone can we perceive with clearness the nature and destination of God's creatures. How important therefore is it to him who would make human life his study, to meditate upon the various aspects in which it is presented to us in the word of God! To assist such meditation I dedicate this little book. I suppose myself addressing those who desire so to live to God here, that they may live with God hereafter. I direct myself especially to the young and inexperienced who are launching on the sea of life with high-raised hopes and heedless confidence; and I seek to fix their attention on that chart which their heavenly Father has provided for them, to

direct their course. May His blessing rest on the attempt! May His Spirit give depth and force to the plain and obvious truths which I affectionately suggest!

Now the first aspect in which Human life is presented to us in Holy Scripture is that of Transitoriness. And the first lesson, therefore, which it impresses on us is the duty and wisdom of passing on from the changeable to the unchangeable, from the temporal to the eternal, from all the vain appearances of this world to the grand realities of that which is to come. "What is your life?" says the Apostle James, "It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." "So teach us to number our days," exclaims the Psalmist, "that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." And if the holy patriarchs were enabled to maintain their peace and to fulfil their duty in the midst of a wilderness world, it was because they exercised that *faith* which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen; and remembering

the transient character of the present state of things, "confessed that they were STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS ON THE EARTH." Heb. xi. 13.

On this confession then let us meditate in this chapter.

And first I would say, If we are strangers and pilgrims on earth LET US SEEK A BETTER COUNTRY. This endeavour St. Paul considers to be necessarily involved in the very confession of our strangeness here. "They that say such things," he adds in ver. 14, "declare plainly that they *seek a country*." For the mind of man cannot conceive itself eternally in passage, and never settled. It longs for rest. It seeks for it, therefore, even on the shifting sands of this world; and it *must* do so, if there be no other revealed to it. But blessed be God! there *is* another revealed. The Lord called Abram out of Haran, *promising* to lead him to a better land. And in the faith of this promise he went forth. In that faith he "dwelt in the land of Canaan as in a strange country, because he desired a better

country, that is, an heavenly, and looked for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God." Among the various tribes of Canaan he felt himself an alien, and when he found it necessary to solicit from them occasional assistance it is in this character he presents himself to them. "Abraham spake unto the sons of Heth saying, I am *a stranger and a sojourner* with you; give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight." He asks no more, you see, than that casual accommodation which the necessities of his pilgrimage required.

And just so will the Christian feel himself an alien in the world, and "declare plainly" by all his sentiments and conduct, that he seeks a better country, that is, an heavenly one. *He was not born for this.* He was created for a higher end and a more glorious inheritance; and all things here are but the means vouchsafed for the attainment of that end, the helps and exercises of his pilgrimage towards that inheritance. These things therefore are not, cannot be, entirely congenial

to him. They suit him for a time ; they are sufficient each one for its temporary purpose and its subordinate end ; but they are not commensurate with his nature nor with his duration. Man was made for God and in the image of God ; and therefore every thing below God is unsatisfactory to him. When the Lord God brought to Adam every beast of the field and every fowl of the air, there was not found among them an help meet for Adam, Nay not even in our kind, not in man himself, can we be satisfied but in proportion as that image of God is manifested in him. From whence the spirit came thither must it tend ; and never therefore can a man be happy till he is renewed after the image of Him that created him. Who feels not this even when he most resists it ? Who gives himself to be the slave of business or of pleasure or of power and feels not, just so much the more, their vanity ? The greatest voluptuaries have ever been the greatest railers at the emptiness of pleasure. The most determined worldlings have ever been the first to curse the phantom

they embraced. The most diligent in this world's traffic have been the most dissatisfied; they have drunk in only bitterness, they have fed only upon ashes. And all the experience of every man has but re-echoed the prophetic exhortation, "Arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest; because it is polluted!" *

. For a better world than man was made; and to *seek that better world the Christian has been consecrated*. He was taken out from the dominion of the Prince of this world when he

* "I am tired and sick of everything in life; there is no joy to be found on earth."—BYRON.

"I do protest to you that I am so tired of my present manner of passing my time, however I may be kept in countenance by the number of those of my own rank and superior fortune, that I never reflect on it without shame."—LORD CARLISLE (1776).

"I have ever been esteemed one of Fortune's chief favourites, nor can I complain of the course my life has taken. Yet truly there has been nothing but toil and care; and in my 75th year I may say that I never had four weeks of genuine pleasure. The stone was ever to be rolled up anew."—GOETHE.

was baptized, and given into the hands of Him who overcame the world. He was transferred from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He was marked out as a child of God and an inheritor of Heaven, that henceforth he might live as a stranger upon earth. He was called forth from the City of Destruction, and this is now his one characteristic that he is a PILGRIM to the Heavenly Jerusalem. He travels through the world, but is not of the world. He looks upon its varied scenes, addresses himself to its necessary duties, partakes of its refreshments, but he does not stop—he does not linger—for he has a higher end, a farther country, a nobler object, and he PASSES ON.

Young Christians! Let me press upon *your* hearts especially, this sacred character with which you are invested. You come forth indeed in the dawn of life, ignorant or forgetful of the end to which you have been consecrated. You look around on this fair world and you are dazzled with its brilliancy. The widening prospect stretches out in glow-

ing richness, and not a cloud appears to rest upon it. But O be not deceived! Yield not to the delusion! That cloud will come. It may be now unnoticeable; it may become at first but as the bigness of a man's hand; but it shall spread across the heavens till they be black with wind and rain, and at last pour down its pitiless fury on your cowering head. And therefore recollect *in time* your *pilgrim character*. Know that the land which seems so broad and fair is limited and deceitful. You are but just landed on its shores; you judge of the interior by the scenes that meet your first quick glance; you hasten to secure a portion of them for your own;—but there are forests to traverse, and defiles to wind along, and pitfalls on the right hand and the left; and then, at last, it is but a little narrow neck of land, the gate and passage to a continent beyond! But while this sobers, let it not discourage you. For you are destined only to *pass through it*. You have been called forth to that continent beyond. You are invited to a full and permanent possession

there. Rise therefore to the dignity of your high calling. Remember whose you are, and whom you serve. Recollect whose name you bear, whose promises have been vouchsafed you, and walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you have been called.

But for this we need a Guidance better than our own. To feel that we are pilgrims would be dreary and discouraging if we must wander forth alone. And therefore, next, LET US FOLLOW THE ONLY FAITHFUL GUIDE. When Abraham was called to leave his native country, he obeyed ; but he obeyed in simple faith. He knew not of the place to which he was summoned ; he was ignorant of the way ; he anticipated not the various circumstances of his pilgrimage ; but then he knew that he was called by God and had a *promise of inheritance*, and therefore he obeyed. "He went out, not knowing whither he went." And He who called him did not leave him comfortless. When he reached the Plain of Moreh "the Lord appeared to him ;" and

Abraham, in grateful acknowledgment of his superintending care, "built an altar to the Lord who appeared unto him." And so through all his wanderings in the land. From God he received direction for his movements. In dependence upon God he went from place to place. And just so also was it with the Israelites when they were called to travel through the wilderness. They were not left alone. Every step of their way was ordered by Him who went before them. Only in dependence on his guidance would Moses venture to undertake their charge. "Moses said unto the Lord, See, Thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people; and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Now therefore I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight shew me now *thy way*, that I may know thee." And what was the answer of the Lord to this petition? "He said, *My presence shall go with thee*, and I will give thee rest."

Now, what the voice of God was to Abraham, what the angel of his presence was to Moses and the Israelites, that is Jesus to the Chris-

tian pilgrim—an all-sufficient, faithful Guide. For this He came down from Heaven to be a sojourner himself on earth ; for this He took our nature that thus, going on before through all the dangers and the sorrows of our pilgrimage, he might direct our steps and animate our hearts. We are not then orphan wanderers ; we do not travel unnoticed and alone ; we have a faithful Leader who will guide us by his hand through every difficulty. It is the sense of strangeness and desertion in our pilgrimage which weighs down the mind, and either makes us shrink from going on with it, or wander in uncertainty. Man cannot stand alone. He cannot bear the *thought* of being alone. His sense of ignorance and insufficiency urges him to look around for guidance and support. Dependence upon some one is essential to us. Countenance, co-operation, help,—without these we are nothing, and we *feel* we are so. And therefore if our point is fixed beyond the confines of earth, we must have assurance of support from something more than earth. If in the invisible we place our home, we must

have some communication from the invisible to maintain our hope and effort to reach that home. Hence the prayer of David for divine direction : “ I am a *stranger in the earth* ; hide not thy commandments from me !” And again, “ Thou art the God of my strength. O send out thy light and thy truth, and let them lead me ; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles !” And hence, to meet this feeling, the various revelations of God. Hence the coming of His Son in the flesh, to take our hand, to reassure our hearts, to proclaim to every perplexed and fainting wanderer, “ I am the way, the truth, and the life.” O what is it to find a FRIEND when most we think ourselves alone and destitute ! what would you feel if, wandering in a foreign land—when you had lost your way, when you found yourself neglected and deceived, when you saw the crowd of business or of pleasure hurrying by you, and none would help, nay none could understand your cry—then some one should at last address you in your mother tongue ; should tell you that he knows your

purpose and your need. "I am your countryman. I am myself a pilgrim even as you. I know the way through all these difficulties. I have traversed the country in the length and breadth thereof. I have found the outlet by which you may reach the better land. Commit yourself to me ; tread in my steps : depend on my protection and support ; and I will bring you through !"

My dear young reader—such a FRIEND for you is Christ your Lord ! O welcome his assistance ! Take no step without his counsel. Submit exclusively to his divine guidance. There are many, I know, who offer to conduct you ; who are themselves the citizens of this world, and therefore naturally boast themselves the best acquainted with it ; who come before the easily admiring mind of youth with much show of wisdom, penetration, skill ; who can talk learnedly of causes and effects, and calculate accurately consequences, and direct you how to gain the most advantage from the world with the least expense of native principle and feeling. But trust them not. Their very

character as prudent men of this world, their very knowledge of the country, which seems their recommendation, is superficial and mistaken. For in order to know any object rightly we must have our point of view not *in* that object, but beyond it and above it. And all experience which is not referred to principles above experience and before experience, which consists in mere details of facts and collections of particulars, is but empiricism, and can never be depended on. A man may traverse the whole continent of Europe, and note down every place he passes through and everything he hears and sees, and yet, if he have not brought to these facts the *mind* by which alone the lesson of these facts can be extracted, he may be full of information, he may luxuriate in detail, he may confound the untravelled by his *knowledge*; but he has learned no *wisdom* and no wisdom can he teach, Only the spirit raised above the world can rightly view the world. Only the heavenly and divine can guide us safely through the earthly. " Even

terrestrial charts" (it has been profoundly said) "cannot be constructed scientifically without celestial observations."* But the men of this world have made no celestial observations; they reject them as beyond their sphere—not *useful*; they have not raised their eye one inch above the low flat surface of the earth on which they creep. No! we must have GOD to teach us concerning man. We must have heaven opened to throw light on earth. We must have THE SON OF GOD to guide us into truth, and lead us to our Father's home. "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven."

And with such a Guide, then, let me pray you, further, seeing you are strangers and pilgrims on the earth, TO WATCH AGAINST THE ALLUREMENTS OF THE WAY. To pass through earth we have necessarily a nature adapted to earth. The body is our medium of communication to receive impressions from the

* Coleridge.

world, and to convey impressions in return. And the care therefore of the body, the supply of its necessities, the providing even for its comfort, these are necessary to our pilgrimage. But O beware, lest in this especially you turn means into ends : lest, instead of seeking these supplies and using these enjoyments for the refreshment of the animal frame, and *thereby of the spirit which resides therein* ; you make the body itself your object, and become the slaves of sense. There are innumerable attractions spread along your path ; riches, pleasures, honours, all solicit your attention, and would beguile you from your course. But recollect that these are really *foreign* to your proper nature ; they are the gauds of an outlandish country, and they do not, cannot, *suit* you. Nay on the contrary, they *injure and destroy* your proper nature, and bring you down from the high dignity of candidates for Heaven, into the contemptible character of traffickers and intriguers for mere dust and ashes. “ I beseech you therefore brethren ” (says St.

Peter) “as *strangers and pilgrims*, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.” The SOUL—this is the treasure to be constantly referred to; and the one incessant question of our life should be what will injure or what will benefit the soul. “For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” Does the traveller on serious business go out of his way for every gaudy show that he may hear extolled by those around his path? Does he linger at his resting-places beyond the time required for necessary refreshment? Does he lose from his remembrance the object of his journey—that for which he was commissioned forth at first, for which he has come so far, and whose completion is of such inestimable moment—and sit down in the foreign land, adopt its manners, pursue its occupations, and get naturalised upon its soil? And shall the CHRISTIAN then be cheated out of his vocation? Shall HE relinquish the deliberate purpose for the momentary feeling, the eternal for

the temporal? Rather let us imitate the grand consistency of Moses, who “refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” *For a season*;—here is the one consideration which renders all things round us, the best even as the worst, the least injurious as the most so, no more than accidents and adjuncts to the one essential object of our life. They are for a season;—I am for eternity;—I must pass on!

And thus, with constant recollection of the object of our pilgrimage, we shall convert the very allurements of our way into advantages. For their evil lies not in themselves but solely in the use we make of them. “Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused if it be received with thanksgiving.” Things are right at fitting times, in proper circumstances, and in due degrees; and they are wrong when used unseasonably, unsuitably, and with excess. The duty of the Christian pilgrim therefore is not to despise but rightly use the various accommodations in his path. He gives

himself not up to them, but he subjugates them to his paramount object. He holds them firmly in their proper place. He maintains their due proportion to his leading purpose. He counts all things lawful, but he is not brought *under the power* of any. He loses not *Himself* in any thing that may employ his passing thoughts, but keeps himself unshackled, free, and independent of them all; to direct and not to be impelled, to guide and not to be run away with, to use all things but be used by none. By the *mind* that he brings with him and throws into them, he modifies their character and consecrates them to his end. For it is not in unreasoning things to have a character of their own. Character is a moral quality. It is the prerogative of mind. And all things therefore take the character which Mind impresses on them; they appear to us in no colours of their own, they do but reflect back on our consciousness the tinge of our interior soul. Let the same country be traversed by men of different tastes and purposes, and how different their views of it; how

various its effects upon their minds ! The man of business fixes his attention on the best commercial towns, and uses every occasion for the furtherance of his traffic. The man of taste darts his admiring eye round each magnificent prospect and through each lonely dell, and comes home rich in high imaginings of the beautiful and the grand. Whilst the benevolent man, unmoved by riches and by loveliness, goes straight onward, even as Howard did at Rome, through palaces and temples, all unconscious of them, to the hovel and the dungeon. O truly it is this which makes us MEN ! To have a world within, bringing under tribute all the world without ; to live in the consciousness of one grand Idea, and to ransack the earth for the materials of executing it. By this have all the saints and sages of the world been dignified, and through this they have gained their pinnacle of glory. " Not personal enjoyment was their object ; but a high heroic Idea of Religion, of Patriotism, of heavenly Wisdom in one or the other form, ever hovered before them. This feeling was as a celestial

fountain, whose streams refreshed into gladness and beauty all the provinces of their existence. In a word, they *willed one thing*, to which all other things were subordinated and made subservient, and therefore they accomplished it. The wedge will rend rocks ; but its edge must be sharp and single : if it be double, the wedge is bruised in pieces and will rend nothing."

And now then, I entreat my readers, even while they read, to **WILL ONE THING**. Dedicate yourselves, this moment, to the one grand purpose of your being, and vow yourselves to God. Pursue your journey through the world, remembering that it is God's world, and that all things you may gain in it are but lent to you by God for the accomplishment of that one end to which God has consecrated you. Catch thus the spirit of St. Paul when he exclaimed "I count not myself to have apprehended, but **THIS ONE THING I DO** ; forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." And thus shall you

realise the spirit of David when he said, concerning all the treasures that he had amassed, "THINE, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as Head above all. Both riches and honour come of Thee, and Thou reignest over all; and in Thine hand is power and might, and in Thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore O our God, we thank thee and praise thy glorious name. For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee. For we are *strangers* before thee and *sojourners*, as were all our fathers; our days on the earth are as a shadow and there is none abiding. O Lord our God, all this store that we have prepared, to build thee an house for thine holy name, COMETH OF THINE HAND AND IS ALL THINE OWN."

And with such a will for God, and reference of all things to God, let us, as strangers and pilgrims on the earth, BEAR PATIENTLY THE

EVILS WE MAY MEET WITH IN OUR COURSE. The world is evil, indeed ; it cannot but be so, seeing that it is unsatisfying, uncongenial to our better nature, and full of danger. But in this particular its very transitoriness becomes our consolation. Whatever we may find upon our journey, it is *but a journey* ; whatever inconveniences we must put up with, we are going home ! Who frets himself about the evils of a temporary inn, when he comes not with the expectation of finding it like home ? Who disturbs himself with the obstacles along his path, if he be but making progress through them ? The greatest happiness of this life is, that it is BUT A PILGRIMAGE. Jacob seems to have consoled himself with this, when he said to Pharaoh, "The days of the years of *my pilgrimage* are an hundred and thirty years; few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their *pilgrimage*." As if by repeating to himself the nature of that life, he might the better bear his recollection of its

evils. As if he had said, "My days have been few and evil; but it matters not,—they are a pilgrimage; the whole of life is but a short quick journey to a better end;" that end on which his heart was set, and which, amidst the sorrows of his death-bed, enabled him to cry, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord!"

Besides, these evils are not only temporary, and therefore really evanescent as compared with the eternal glory which is promised to us, but they are blessings in disguise. They start out before us, it is true, with threatening aspect; there is gloom upon their countenance and enmity in their eye; but if we use them rightly they become our friends. Trouble, poverty, sickness, death itself, are not hindrances but helps to him, who can amidst them all by faith hold fast his purpose and pursue his course. Nay they are *necessary* for this end; they are the only means by which it can be realised. For let us not forget that this course is a moral one; and all moral progress must depend on moral energy; and moral

energy on moral exercise ; and moral exercise on the occasions which are given for exertion. And these occasions, to produce exertion at all, *must* come before us in the form of trials ; that is, of means for testing our powers and discovering what spirit we are of. Why was it that God, when he brought out the Israelites from Egypt, did not lead them by the nearest road (not ten days' journey) into Canaan ? Why did he bid them turn into the defiles of Baal-Zephon and thus bring on them the pursuing host of Pharaoh, and then make them wander in the wilderness in constant difficulty for not less than forty years ? Just for this very reason, Moses tells us, because these troubles were necessary to discipline their rebellious minds. "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee and to prove thee, *to know what was in thine heart*, whether thou wouldst keep his commandments or no ; and he humbled thee and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not neither did

thy fathers know, that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God doth man live." There you have the object,—there the blessing,—of affliction. To bring us to know ourselves, and to know our God; to school us by experience (that only efficient teacher) into mistrust of self and dependence upon God; to shew us that we are nothing and that He is everything; to bring down our understanding into the dust of humiliation, that our reason may rise into the pure serene of faith. Christian reader, never look upon affliction with the trembling glance of an appalled and slavish spirit, but with the steadfast eye of humble faith. Know that it comes to you from the Good One, and therefore comes for good. Contemplate every obstacle as capable indeed of throwing you backward in your course, but as intended rather for a stepping-stone to help you onward. And thus, address yourself thereto with all the quiet courage of a Christian soldier, pausing only to collect your energies

and breathe the prayer of faith ; stepping back only for a moment that you may throw yourself more vigorously forward ; being strong in the Lord and in the power of His might ; and taking unto you the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand in the evil day and having done all to stand ! For “ Now,” bethink you, “ Now is an occasion that shall exercise, and thereby strengthen my fidelity. Now the spirit of God within me stirs to noble deeds. Now angels crowd around to witness my demeanour. Now my Lord himself stoops down from his exalted throne with all the interest of one who himself has combated, and has overcome. Now he lifts up to my view the glittering prize which is to animate me. Now he reminds me of his all-sufficient power to save. Now therefore I will lay aside every weight, and the mistrust which doth so easily beset me, and I will resolutely press along the course before me, LOOKING UNTO JESUS !—unto JESUS, the author and finisher of my faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the

shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God !”

And here then is the last particular which I would press upon you, as strangers and pilgrims on the earth :—LOOK OFTEN TO THE GLORY WHICH AWAITS YOU AT THE END.

Our journey is a journey of faith. And by faith only, constantly bringing near to us its glorious termination, can it be persevered in. The traveller may meet with friends to guide him, even in a foreign land ; he may be indifferent to the allurements of the way, immersed in the commission which has been entrusted to him ; he may bear its evils patiently, and press undaunted through them all ; but yet how often does a pang shoot through his heart, when he remembers home—his beautiful home ! how often does the prospect of that home supply his only joy ! And thus it must be also with the Christian pilgrim. It was so even with Jesus himself, and much more must it be so with his followers. Jesus was full of communion with his heavenly Father, throughout

his pilgrimage ; he was far above all the allurements of the way ; he never lost sight for a moment of the work which he was sent to finish ; he triumphed over insult pain and cruelty and made them all subservient to his end ; yet Jesus—even Jesus—longed to be away and reach his home. Remember his touching exclamation when he found his very friends and followers so weak in faith, so dishonourable to their master, “ O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you ! ” And who feels not this exclamation bursting from his bosom when he looks around upon the vice, the misery, the inconsistency, the folly, and the little faith of men ! On no one here, not even on the best, can we repose our souls. To all, even those far holier than ourselves, we feel comparatively strangers. Alone we began our mortal course, alone we travel through it, and alone we die. Persons things and circumstances affect us as we pass along ; but they are not ourselves, our home, our God. From the bosom of the Infinite did we spring, and in

that bosom we hasten again to hide ourselves. It is this which sets our affection upon things above and not on things on the earth, for "we are dead and our life is hid with Christ in God." It is this which soothes and sanctifies our cares, for "there remaineth a rest for the people of God." It is this which quickens us to diligence and animates to hope, for "he that overcometh shall sit with Christ upon his throne, even as He also overcame and is set down with his Father upon his throne."

CHAPTER II.

LIFE A RACE.

WE live in a day of strong excitement, and there is a spirit abroad which, like the troubled ocean, cannot rest. Nothing therefore is looked upon with so much reprobation by the world as dreaming listlessness; nothing is so universally demanded as activity and vigour. Each man feels he has a point to gain, and each man rushes onward in the race of life with every power on the stretch.

Nor is this, in itself, to be hastily condemned. To propose to ourselves an end, to keep that end in view with steady pertinacity, and to pursue that end with all the powers we possess, is not unworthy of a rational being. But then of course *the nature of the end itself* ought to be taken into account, when we proceed to estimate the *moral worthiness* of the struggles

which we see men make. We would not fall into the gross mistake, a common one though it be, of ignorantly admiring the quantity, without reference to the quality, of the energies which are at work before us; of being dazzled like the multitude by mere feats of will, into the oblivion or the extenuation of the evil spirit which actuates that will, or the perverse direction which it takes. Force of character, this is the idol before which men now throw themselves; while the way in which that force of character is shewn, the objects which it is put forth to reach, these alas! are but too little regarded amidst our wonderment. Men yield up their applause to what can never gain their approbation.

It is not then energy alone that we must seek, but well-directed energy. It is not the positive quantity of power put forth which must content us, but that power estimated by its proportion to the worth of the objects towards which it is directed. "Wealth," the men of this world will contend, "is good, and therefore earnestly to be pursued. Knowledge

better still, and our endeavours to acquire it proportionably more intense. Political power more glorious still, and nothing therefore to be shrunk from to obtain it. The raising ourselves upward in the scale of social eminence, the final end of all these nearer ends, and well deserving therefore the devotion of the life."

But are such ends as these the proper end of man? Is this life all? And is the highest prize in this world that on which a rational being should waste his energies? When he has seized the spoil of wealth and pleasure, and toiled up the steep of ambition, and seated himself upon the pinnacle of glory, has he reached his proper Elevation? And is there nothing more remaining for him but to triumph in the height that he has gained, for some few quickly fleeting years, till Death shall come and strike him from his seat, and hurl him down for evermore?

You shudder at the thought of such a consummation. You shrink from granting this life to be all, and these few years of being the end of man. You tell me, and you tell me

truly, that man is born indeed on earth but he is born for heaven ; that he begins to live in time but that he cannot cease to live throughout eternity !

And if then there is another state of being above this, and a further life beyond this, there must be objects of that higher state, and prizes of that further life, as far above, as far beyond, what worldlings count deserving of our energies, as heaven is higher than the earth, and eternity stretches out beyond all time. But, by the supposition, in proportion to the greatness of our object should be the strenuousness of our pursuit. I turn therefore to these higher objects ; I seek the company of those who grant their excellence ; and I ask, Where are these men to whom there is proposed a heavenly prize ? Where are these racers who are panting onwards towards a goal set up beside the throne of God ? Let me rush forward with the ardent crowd ; let me too be a candidate for life eternal !

But, alas ! what do I find among these professed expectants of a life to come ? Every

thing seems reversed ; our calculations are at fault ; our principle no longer holds ; we seem to have passed into a different sphere ! Objects here may be transcendent yet efforts may be puny ; indifference is not wondered at ; listlessness is not reprovèd ; a man may fail of his engagement and yet scarcely a voice is heard in reprobation of the inconsistency ; there seems a sort of tacit understanding that all this is only natural. Nay worse than this. He who does pursue his object with a zeal proportioned to its worth, *he* is the man to be pointed at as "very extraordinary,"—"a little touched,"—"good, well-meaning, but enthusiastic,"—"carrying things too far !"

But not so thought the Apostle Paul, when he declared to the Galatians, "It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing." Not so felt he, when to the Philippians he wrote concerning his own principle of life, "What things were gain to me I counted loss for Christ : yea doubtless and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord ; for whom I

have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ and be found in him ;—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect ; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended ; but this one thing I do, FORGETTING THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE BEHIND, AND REACHING FORTH UNTO THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE BEFORE, I PRESS TOWARD THE MARK FOR THE PRIZE OF THE HIGH CALLING OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS."

Here then we learn, that LIFE must be contemplated not merely as a Pilgrimage—a passive relinquishment of one country for another : but moreover as a RACE,—an active pressing towards a prize which in that other

country is proposed to us. God has called us to obtain a heavenly prize ; and we must press on towards it with our whole soul.

That GOD HAS CALLED US TO A HEAVENLY PRIZE, the Apostle sets before us in that lively imagery, which to the Philippians would be so familiar, of the Grecian games. It is a disadvantage to us, as regards many of the comparisons of Holy Writ, that the very illustrations which at once flashed light upon the meaning of the Scripture writers, now require, themselves, to be illustrated ; but still, in the image before us there are some leading features which we can with little difficulty enter into.

For, first, you will remember, that the Candidates in the Grecian race *were beforehand duly called and registered* ; and none who had not enrolled themselves were permitted to run for the prize. This shews us what the Apostle means, by speaking of " the prize *of our high calling* of God," the prize (that is) to which we have been called from on high, which has been held out to us by God himself. As the Lord called Abraham from his country and

his kindred and his father's house, into a land that he intended to give to him for an inheritance ; as he called the Israelites out of Egypt by the voice of Moses, that they might press through the wilderness into the promised land ; so is it the distinctive title of all Christians that they are " holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling " (the call from heaven), chosen and registered by God himself as candidates for the crown of glory.

And how variously is this call made to you, Christian reader ; how is it re-echoed, as it were, from every side ! From your earliest infancy God has marked you for his own. He has consecrated you as a member of his Son, by Baptism ; he has enrolled you in the number of his elect children ; and has put you into that school of spiritual training, his holy church, wherein you are taught what a solemn vow promise and profession has been made by you, to follow the example of your Saviour Christ and to become like unto him.

And then, as reason dawns and you are able to learn to what a glorious race you have

been dedicated, the call of God comes to you by his holy word. No longer in symbols and things done for you in your unconsciousness, but by the ministration of awful truths to your understanding, and pressing admonitions to your conscience and your heart. God is proclaimed to you as your Father—already your Father—standing in a covenanted relation to you through his own dear Son. You are claimed for Him, as one who bears his name and is signed with his seal. You are called on to redeem the vows which you have made, and with a personal intelligence and a personal determination to choose the Lord for your God,—yea, rather with adoring gratitude to recognise the choice that He has made of you—and learning that you are not your own but bought with a price, to give yourself to glorify Him in your body and your spirit which are His.

Nor does the call of God stop here. He speaks to you by his Spirit within you, as well as by his Church and by his word without you ; and no one can have seriously meditated

on his obligations as a Christian, and carried home to his secret chamber the great truths which in the congregation of the saints have fallen upon his ear, without there coming on the silence of his solitude a voice like that to Samuel on his bed, to which he would do well to answer with a child-like reverence, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth!" O that we might listen with more practised ear to these calls of God! O that we might remember that God speaks as plainly in the convictions of our reason, the yearnings of our heart, the expostulations of our conscience, as when, upon the burning top of Sinai, the noise of the trumpet waxed exceeding loud and God answered by a voice and said, "I am the Lord thy God, Thou shalt have none other gods but me!"

Consider then youthful Christian, you are no solitary wanderer through this world, without an object or a home; you are an authorized candidate for a heavenly crown. "God himself has *called* you to his kingdom and glory." You are one of that privileged band

whose special title in holy writ is "the *called* of Christ Jesus, beloved of God, *called to be saints*." And you may, therefore, "run the race which is set before you, looking unto Jesus the Author of your faith"—the presiding Judge who has authorized your undertaking,—and through whom you are both permitted and encouraged "to follow after, if that you may apprehend that *for which also you have been apprehended by Christ Jesus*."

But next, you will remember, that in those ancient games there was exposed to the view of the Candidates, thus called and authorized to run the race, *the prize held out to them*. By which you will understand the allusion of St. Paul when he declares, "I reach forth *unto those things which are before*," and "I press towards the mark *for the prize*!"

For that, which to these ancient racers was a matter of sight, is held up now to *the eye of faith*. "The prize of our high calling" is continually presented to the mind's eye in the word of God for our beholding, both to quicken and

to encourage us in our pursuit. And (what is much to be noted) this resplendent object is so held up, in such a variety of lights, and so turned as it were to the specific gaze of each particular candidate, yea even to the different moods of mind in which he may be found, as to present to each just that specific *form* of blessedness which in his actual condition he stands most in need of and desires to obtain.

Are you *toiling* in the race with sinking powers, your spirits gone, your energies well nigh spent? Then there is lifted up to you the prize in that most welcome form of *Rest*—*Repose*—the blessedness of relaxation after toil. “There remaineth” says the Scripture “a rest for the people of God.”

Or do you feel the *loneliness* of your Christian course? Have you left all to follow Christ? Do you find your friends—your very nearest perhaps—some indifferent, some unfriendly, towards your zeal? Have you left (as well you may) for this great prize which beams out from the distant future, like a far-off star amidst the darkness, the artificial glare

with which men decorate the present? And do you find that though indeed an elect one, you are, like the Christians whom St. Peter sought to cheer, "an elect *of the dispersion*," regarded with suspicion by the world around you as an alien? Then recollect, the prize of your high calling is presented to you as just that which makes up for all these losses; you may feel now a stranger, without a home on earth, but you are "begotten again unto a lively hope, to an inheritance incorruptible undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." And he who called you to the Race has said, "Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, and in the world to come eternal life!"

Nay even, have you to bewail your inward *sluggishness*, and that burden of corruption which clogs your steps? Vexed with yourself that you can serve God only with so much dis-

traction ; ashamed that through the power of your besetting unbelief you look off so from Him who called you to his glory ? Then remember, the bright prize is held out before you in the form of that *perfect holiness*, that uninterrupted service, which you long for ! “ Thy people shall be all righteous.” “ We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

Nor is it to the consummation only of your course that you must look for comfort. You have it now. There is one more particular of those games, which the Apostle has in view ;—that *the presiding Judge encouraged by his watchful countenance those who ran.*

And this presiding Judge, to Christians, is no other than their Lord and Saviour who has gone before them ! “ I press toward the mark,” says the Apostle, “ for the prize of the high calling of God *in Christ Jesus.*” And in his Epistle to the Hebrews he exhorts them, “ Wherefore, seeing we are compassed about

with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin" (of too ready discouragement) "which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience" (with persevering energy) "the race that is set before us, *looking unto Jesus*, the author and finisher of our faith;" keeping our eyes fixed on his enlivening countenance, under whose auspices we began, and with whose applause we may complete our course. The Christian racer does not run unnoticed and alone. The eyes of heaven are on him. And he who is the leader of us all, who has himself gone through the course and now presides as Judge to crown the victor,—he himself observes and sympathises with, yea helps, you in the race of life.

What an encouraging image is that (for example) of his never-failing *watchfulness*, which in the prophet Zechariah is exhibited, to keep up the confidence of every one who, notwithstanding difficulty and infirmity, still strives to do the work of God. "Behold, the stone that I have laid before Joshua ; *upon one stone shall*

be seven eyes ;—For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel *with those seven* ; they are *the eyes of the Lord* which run to and fro through the whole earth."

And what *sympathy* moreover, as well as watchful observation, does your Lord bestow on you. "We have not an high priest" says St. Paul "who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities ; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." He knows your frame. He understands your struggles. He enters into all the circumstances which encumber you in your course. "He himself who has suffered, being tempted, is able to succour them that are tempted."

And thus you see, there is *help* for you as well as watchful sympathy ;—effectual help ; "secret refreshings, which repair the soul, and fainting spirits uphold." "I can do all things," says the Apostle, "through Christ which strengtheneth me." "Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working which worketh in me mightily." O who shall shrink from

putting forth all his energies, who shall grow weary in well-doing, when he hears that stirring exhortation, that all-sufficient promise, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord!"

And now then, having set before you the glorious prize to which God himself has called you, I entreat you next to **PRESS ON TOWARDS IT WITH YOUR WHOLE SOUL**. "This one thing I do," says the Apostle, "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I *press toward the mark*, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Where you will observe that we are called to run the race of life, first with *singleness of purpose*. "This one thing I do." It is impossible adequately to express the brief, quick energy of the Apostle's phrase. In two little monosyllables he has condensed a world of meaning. "I count not myself to have appre-

hended,—but!—*one thing* there is!"—One object before my eyes—one determination filling my mind—one effort leaping forth from my will—"I press toward the mark!" O what singleness of purpose does this denote! It is just what the Lord demanded of Martha when he said, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things but *one thing is needful*, and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken from her." Just what he demands from all his followers when he tells us, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other; ye cannot serve God and Mammon." Just what David expressed when he declared, "*One thing* have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple." Just what he prayed for when he said, "Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth; *unite my heart* to fear thy name."

And need I remind you how this grand simplicity of purpose actuated the fervent Paul throughout his daily course? Look at his first conversion. Immediately the scales fell from his eyes and he received insight into the truth of Christ "he arose and was baptized;" "and *straightway* he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God." Look at his subsequent life. "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God." Where will you find the quiet heroism, the energy of repose, like this? That famous saying, "It is not needful that I live; it is needful that I go;" is nothing to it. And look at his closing spirit. "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day!" Is there not here the

same mind which was in Christ Jesus? Are we not stirred to follow Paul as he followed Christ? That Christ, who is the perfect model of this singleness of purpose. Who told his wondering disciples, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." Who replied to the threats of Herod, "Go ye and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected"—*i.e.* shall finish my course! Who rebuked the expostulation of St. Peter "Be it far from thee Lord, this shall not be unto thee," with an immediate and indignant "Get thee behind me Satan!" Who, in the full prospect of an ignominious agonizing death, could calmly say "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. No man taketh it from me but I lay it down of myself." And who calls, Christian reader, on you and me and all his followers, to tread in his steps—though they be marked with blood—when he declares so solemnly "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up

his cross and follow me. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."

I press then on your conscience this first element of all moral greatness. "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee." Without this you must stumble at the very entrance on your course. You lay up for yourself intolerable disappointment. Shame, remorse, continual vacillation—how can a mind thus agitated ever gain a crown?

"God and the world we worship both together,
Draw not our laws to Him but His to ours;
Untrue in both, so prosperous in neither,
The imperfect will brings forth but barren flowers!
Unwise as all distracted interests be,
Strangers to God, fools in humanity;
Too good for great things, and too great for good,
While still 'I dare not' waits upon 'I would.'"

But where, on the other hand, this simplicity of purpose is, there all things are ours. The first principle of ancient Ethics tells you this. The testimony of living men tells you this. What says the tutor of Alexander?

“If there be truly an *ultimate end* of all things that we do, which for itself alone is to be sought, and all things else for nothing but the sake of this; if there be one exception to the general law of all desire,—the seeking things as means to further ends; if there be one end to be sought exclusively for itself (and without this our desires must run on to infinity, always craving and never satisfied*), then it is plain that this one ultimate end must be *the good* for which we are made, and thus the best and chiefest of all goods. The knowledge therefore of this, how essential to life! The steady aim at this, with all the singleness of a bowman marking the very bull’s-eye of the target, how indispensable to success!”

And what was the answer of a Lord High Chancellor of England to one who asked the secret of his multifarious achievements? Just

* See this convincingly shewn by Bishop Butler, —Serm. XIII. On the love of God.—“To suppose no gain advantage or interest but as a means to something further, is the same absurdity with respect to life as an infinite series of effects without a cause in speculation.”

this: "I am a whole man to one thing at a time." O then to be "a whole man" for Christ!—no division of heart—no treachery—no distraction—no stray thoughts and purposes—no attempt at carrying on two incompatible objects together; but all things made to centre in one, all organized subordinated and where needful *sacrificed*, with reference to one; that one the end of our creation, the perfecting of our nature, the imitation of our God!

But next observe with what *precision of plan* the Apostle would have us pursue the race to which we are called. "I press" he says "toward the mark." That is, having fixed my end, I bend my whole soul forward toward that end. As my mental determination, so are my practical volitions. There is no confusion, no disorder, no running at random, no divergence from the line marked out to me, no bolting from the course. "I so run" he says elsewhere "*not as uncertainly*"; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air; but I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest that by any

means when I have preached to others I myself should be a cast-away."

And how important is this! This steadiness as well as simplicity; this practical management of all details which may conduce to the furtherance of the end we have determined on! How easy to be fervent in desire; how difficult to be firm of purpose! The greater our elasticity of nature the greater our danger of recoil. Even as those troops who are most impetuous in the onset are the soonest thrown into confusion. The Christian needs "deliberate valour." To have a mind for the minutest details amidst the largest general views, to throw our active powers into the subordinate means, as readily as to conceive the end to be pursued, this is the rare prerogative of great men. Yet this is what the Christian needs. He must overlook nothing around him, while he is intent on the prize before him. He must not, secure of his integrity, be heedless of the dangers which crowd his course, nor must he be so occupied with those dangers as to look off from the mark. On the one

hand, he is to consider himself as no longer "in the flesh;" but transferred by union with his risen Saviour into a new world; a denizen of heaven. Yet on the other hand, he is to maintain a steady conflict with the things of sense and earth. "Ye are dead," says the Apostle, "and your life is hid with Christ in God." Yet "mortify" (yea, mortify *therefore*) "your members which are on the earth." Do allurements crowd around you to draw off your heart? The exhortation is, "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so *walk ye in him*, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith as ye have been taught." And do discouragements harass and exhaust you? The exhortation is, "Consider him who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

Here then is the place for Christian *prudence*, as the handmaid of Christian simplicity. For the bringing in all those rules of practical ethics which teach, a definite purpose being given, how to construct the daily life into ac-

eordance with it. Here comes in the call for those religious exercises which assist us both to recollect and to work out that purpose. The reading with practical devout self-application the word of God. The regular use of private prayer, of public ordinances. The counsel, consolations, and refreshments of Christian intercourse. "Exercise thyself," says Paul to Timothy, "*Exercise thyself* unto godliness." That is, Go through a course of moral training, of spiritual gymnastics. Attend to the minutest rules, practise the most laborious discipline, by which you may produce a healthy vigorous alert condition of soul. "Herein do I *exercise myself*" he says again "to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men."

But then this practical prudence must be kept in close alliance with that spiritual simplicity. In the moral race unity must co-exist with multiplicity—fixedness of end with flexibility of means. As Burke says, "I am one who would preserve consistency by varying my means to secure the unity of the end."

Multiplicity, by itself, produces divergence. It becomes a chaos of inward struggles entangled in a crowd of outward contrivances. It is but a complication of machinery without a "governor." But multiplicity in the service of unity; the impetus and intricacy of the external works (the separate volitions) controlled and simplified by the oneness of the inward regulator (the commanding will) how facile are the movements of such a mind; how grand is its harmony; how mighty its efficiency! "In every work that Hezekiah began in the service of the house of God and in the law and in the commandments to seek his God, he *did it with all his heart, and prospered.*"

Once more. The image of the Apostle teaches us with what *progression of effort* we should run the race of life. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect."—"I count not myself to have apprehended but *forgetting those things which are behind*, and reaching forth unto those which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Observe here how utterly impossible it is for one in earnest in religion to be satisfied with any present attainments. The Apostle had done much and had suffered much for Christ. He had thrown himself with all his soul into the race for heaven ; and he had outstripped all around him, even though latest in the field. " Last of all He was seen of me also as of one born out of due time ; for I am the least of the apostles,—but I laboured more abundantly than they all ; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." But nevertheless, he looks not on himself as having attained. True energy is never satisfied. It never counts itself to have done anything while anything remains to be done. And true piety is ever characterised by humility—the sense of incompleteness—the longing for improvement—the desire to *grow* in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Besides, is not movement the very law of all being ? There is no standing still throughout the world. The seasons wax and wane. The earth's productions flourish and decay. Matter

itself accumulates and wears down. The ancient ocean, which has never from its first creation rested for a moment, ebbs and flows, encroaches here and there retires. Time is ever on the wing. The stream of life is running fast. Each moment brings you nearer to old age, to death, to judgment, to eternity. And shall you pause? Shall you grow languid? shall you hesitate? Shall not the attraction of the heavenly sphere increase with every step that brings you nearer to it? Will not the song of the redeemed wax louder and more sweet to your enraptured ear? And the exceeding brightness of the heavenly Jerusalem break forth more distinctly on your fascinated eye? And will you not see more of the King in his glory? Till thus "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord you become changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Look upward therefore, and look onward. Fix your regards habitually, not on what you are but what you should be; not on the space

you have already passed but what remains to be run over ; not on what men may think your excellences but what you know to be your defects ; not on the nearer guide-posts only, which may seem to need but little effort to reach, but on the far-off splendour of the goal. That splendour, recollect, is the blaze of full-orbed holiness. The prize you seek is but the consummation of the process you are carrying on in its pursuit. The happiness of heaven is just the holiness which in the very course towards heaven we have been forming in us. And gaze then on that holiness in its length and breadth and godlike height. Be not satisfied with the name, but meditate long and often on the rich variety of the qualities which make up the conception for which it stands. Take such an enumeration of these qualities as is afforded by St. Paul ; " Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are dignified, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report ;" and while you look

upon them you will never feel you have attained, or are already perfect: you will forget the things which are behind, and reach forth to the things which are before. For just in proportion as our conception of holiness is full and vivid (provided always we have been regenerated to the *love* of holiness), so will be our desire for holiness, our labour to attain it. We cannot rest satisfied with living far below the excellence that we admire. We cannot be at ease under the contrast between the ideal in our mind and the actual in our life. Shame is waked up by comparison, and resolves spring out of shame, and efforts follow on resolve, and thus an onward movement is produced, a new stride forward is made towards what we gaze at—the neck is stretched forth towards it with intense desire—the whole man bends to its pursuit—we “reach forth to those things which are before.”

But where shall we behold this holiness so full, so beauteous, as it is revealed to us in the face of Jesus Christ? It is not words alone, not even inspired words, that can convey to us

its perfect image. It is only the practical manifestation of His living character. He is the great Exemplar of what human nature, quickened by the Divine, can grow to. "He is the only true and perfect flower" (as it has been exquisitely said by Bishop Wilberforce) "which has ever unfolded itself out of the root and stalk of humanity." "The man Christ Jesus,"—*man* emphatically,—is the model of his species. This was indeed to bring down virtue from the skies to dwell among mankind, when the Son of God became the son of man. To study him is to study truth and life in one. To look at him is to behold identified the Ideal and the Actual. It is to see Man verily existing, breathing, speaking, acting in that image of God in which he was at first created. It is to see the Second Adam, the Lord from heaven, restoring to us the bright model of all human excellence which the first Adam broke into a thousand fragments. In Him concentrate all the various rays of holiness to form one pure white light of mildest though intensest splendour. And

therefore it is by "looking unto Jesus," as at once our Righteousness, our Peace, our Strength, our Model, and our Crown, that we must with patience run the Race that is set before us.

CHAPTER III.

LIFE A CONFLICT.

AMONG the many seeming contradictions (which nevertheless are full of harmony) presented to us in the word of God, is the twofold view it sets before us of Human life. On the one hand this is represented as of all things the most insignificant—a passing shadow—a troubled sleep—a vapour which appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away. And who does not feel the justness of this representation? Who that has had any experience of what life brings with it,—of its pleasures as well as cares, its triumphs as well as disappointments,—is not tempted but too often to exclaim with Job, “Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul? I loathe it; I would

not live alway ; let me alone, for my days are vanity."

But this same life is not the less represented, on the other hand (and this representation also do we *feel* to be true), as the most striking instance of the divine benevolence ; as the most precious deposit entrusted to our care ; as that for which one possession after another, yea all that a man hath, he will gladly and justly give. Whence this difference of view ?

It is when considered *by itself alone*, that this life is so poor, so paltry, so far below all possibility of satisfying our immortal nature. But it is when considered *with reference to the purposes for which God has vouchsafed it to us, and to the life which is to follow it*,—with which it is connected in the order, not of precedence only but of cause and effect,—it is as Time flowing into Eternity ; things visible in connexion with things invisible ; this world as the school of preparation for another ; that life assumes to our perceptions its legitimate form, and dilates before the awe-struck eye

into the most august of all things. In this view it becomes to us a Pilgrimage towards an eternal home—a Race for a divine prize—a CONFLICT FOR A HEAVENLY CROWN.

This latter is the aspect in which I would propose it to your meditation in the present chapter. May we benefit thereby!

And first I would remind you, that A STRUGGLE WE MUST GO THROUGH, IF WE WOULD GAIN A HEAVENLY CROWN. Life is not merely a Race, which needs activity of mind; it is moreover a Conflict, which requires *Strength of Character*. We have not merely to stretch forth towards a prize held out before us; we have to struggle with powerful enemies around us and within us. And therefore St. Paul, in his First Epistle to the Corinthians (ix. 25), compares himself to one who “*striveth for the mastery* ;” that is, to a wrestler who has pitted himself against a strenuous antagonist, and is contending for his life.

And so it is with every Christian. To be a follower of Christ is to become a wrestler with

the enemies of Christ. To have enrolled our names as candidates for heaven is to have pledged ourselves to mortal conflict with the powers of hell. And therefore, inseparably connected with our baptismal consecration as inheritors of a crown of glory is that solemn vow promise and profession, that we will renounce whatever would hinder our attainment of that crown; the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanity of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh, so that we will not follow nor be led by them.

For what is that crown of glory, to the hope of which we have been elected in Christ Jesus, but *moral happiness*?—happiness, that is, which springs out from the balance of the mind through all its powers; as distinguished from pleasure, which is but the disturbance of that balance by animal excitement; the one pure deep quiet as the glassy lake, the other perturbed and frothy as the noisy torrent. And what is moral happiness therefore but moral perfectness; the accompaniment in the consciousness of harmony in the conscience, the

fragrance which exales from spiritual health, the gentle music of the moral powers as they move in fullest concord, "cycle in epicycle, orb in orb," accordant with the law of God?

And if then happiness be holiness, and the attainment of it but the perfecting of our moral nature, you see at once how impossible is the gaining such a prize without a previous struggle for it. For that perfection of our moral nature comes not of itself,—it must be sought; it is not to be wrought out of our present nature,—it is just the contrary; it is not assisted by the things around us,—it is strenuously opposed.

It comes not of itself. For when we say that holiness is the end for which we have been made, without which we become not truly men, and therefore cannot be happy, (that is, satisfied,) it does not follow that this holiness will spring up by a natural process of development, even as inanimate nature falls blindly into its predestined forms, or as plants and animals grow up unconsciously to their appointed stature. Moral perfectness must be

a conscious perfectness, and therefore can be reached by us only through a conscious process. It is harmony of *will* with God, and therefore can be wrought out only by energy of will; according to the law not of spontaneous growth but moral freedom. Man is not a passive recipient, a thing; he is exposed to the responsibilities, even as he enjoys the privileges, of a Person. We ourselves must know our happiness, to be happy; we ourselves must labour out our holiness, to be holy. "Work out," says the Apostle, "your own salvation with fear and trembling."

But next, this holiness we cannot *work out of our present nature*. It is not in it, and therefore cannot be wrought out from it. Nay, the very antagonist of holiness is in it, and by this antagonist is the effort for holiness, the desire of holiness, the very thought of holiness, strangled in its birth. Holiness is order, proportion, concord. Our natural condition is disorder, disproportion, discord; the judgments of the mind obscured by the exhalations from the heart; the flesh soon coming to maturity

while the understanding is in perfect childhood ; the animal nature fed and pampered while the spiritual is starved. Holiness, again, is conformity to the will of God, while our first natural principle is to follow our own will. Holiness is the going out of ourselves to seek the welfare of other beings, while our earliest impulse, on the contrary, is to draw all other beings into the vortex of our selfishness. O the *unnaturalness* of moral excellence to a creature sunk in moral corruption ! “ What is man that he should be clean ; and he that is born of a woman, that he should be righteous ? ”

Still more. *All things around us are against* the attainment of that holiness which is proposed to us as our prize. Not only is the plant degenerate, the seed of a degenerate vine ; but the atmosphere in which it grows is deadly. The evil within is solicited and inflamed and made desperate by evil without. Man injures his fellow man instead of helping him. Each one, himself one of a seed of evil-doers, becomes to the rest a corrupter. And then the devil, with malicious energy, works

by all to hurry all into the gulf of endless misery. "We wrestle not with flesh and blood only but with principalities and powers; with the rulers of the darkness of this world, with spiritual wickedness in high places."

And therefore, must not every one go through a conflict—a tremendous conflict—who would win the heavenly crown? See the *necessity* that this life should be to us a life of struggle, if we would have it followed by a life of blessedness. See how the very promises of Christ can be propounded to us only under the images of rest from labour, of reward for conflict. "This is a faithful saying, If we be *dead* with him we shall also reign with him."—"To him that *overcometh* will I give to eat of the tree of life."—"He that *overcometh* shall be clothed in white raiment."—"Him that *overcometh* will I grant to sit with me in my throne!" To fallen man, in conflict all religion must begin, and by conflict must be perfected. It is no transplantation from Paradise. It is no spontaneous growth of happy nature. On the ruins of the old man must

the new man be built up. In the destruction of the flesh must the spirit live. The strong man armed must first be bound, and in the nervous grasp of faith must be compressed from day to day, or there is no freedom for us, no holiness, no heaven. The Christian may indeed be *safe* in Christ but he is not yet *saved* by Christ. The one is matter of faith but the other is matter of hope,—a hope which can be realized only through a persevering struggle even to the end. “Let not him that girdeth on his armour boast himself as he that putteth it off.”—“The husbandman that *laboureth* is he who shall partake the fruits.”

Is then, let me ask the youthful Christian, is this moral conflict begun in you? There is especial danger for those who have been brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord with scarcely any effort of their own, lest they mistake the habit of propriety for the energy of holiness. The grand object, indeed, of the religious education with which you have been blessed is to diminish for you

the perils of this moral conflict ;—so to store your mind with practical principles, and refine your conscience into quick susceptibility, and train your will to ready obedience, that your own subsequent labour may be lightened, and you may find the ideas of duty welcome to you and your self-submission to its claims habitual. But yet never imagine that you can be altogether spared the conflict with yourself. Mistake not acquiescence for self-determination ; superficial smoothness of conduct for deep consolidation of character ; a facile imitation of what is good for a power of producing what is good. Examine then your inward spirit. Ask yourself, “ If all my many supports were now cut away from me should I still stand ? If I were transplanted into a less favourable clime is the root of the matter in me ? Do I know what it is to say ‘ No,’ to myself ? to work against my constitutional tendencies ; to keep down my bosom sin ; to wage a war within that no man knoweth of,—my God my only witness, and my God my only strength ? ” For if there is nothing of all this,

how can you stand the trials of your character, the manifold tests of its solidity and genuineness, which even now are waiting for you? Your friends, indeed, have launched you forth with tender care, well found in all things needful for your voyage; but when you get into the open sea, where will be your skill to hold the helm? When the tempest bursts upon you, where will be your manly bravery and virtue? The *goodness* of a well-instructed youth, O how amiable is it! We look on it as Jesus looked on the young ruler and we love it. But goodness is not *virtue*. And virtue is the product only of trial—only of conflict—only of oft-repeated victory over ourselves in little things, and thereby training up ourselves for great things. Else, when our Lord puts in his full demand and says, "Sell all that you have and follow me," what will be your surprise your disappointment your sorrow,—ay, and your going away! O remember, amiable young persons, easy-minded persons, who would glide languidly along the path of promise, satisfied with good feelings and

right purposes,—that while God is prodigal of grace and of encouragement he gives no countenance to indolence—that though he brought his people out from Egypt by a mighty hand and stretched-out arm, and they had only to stand still to see the glory of God, yet that he brought them out to subjugate them *to his Law*; to discipline them by his providences and to train them by his institutions to become a people *holy* to the Lord. And Jesus himself, though he invited all to him with tenderest compassion, yet never concealed from those who came that his invitations demanded, nay involved, self-sacrifice. He who said “Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest;” said also, “If any man come to me let him take up his cross and follow me.” And that sermon which begins with consolation, “Blessed are they who are dispirited, who mourn, who are oppressed,” ends with solemn warning, “Every one that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the

sand ; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall thereof."

But these considerations bring us to a second general lesson derived from looking upon life as a time of conflict. If it is indeed thus true that a struggle we must all go through in order to a heavenly crown, then it follows that in order to that struggle we need **A DAILY EXERCISE OF STRICT SELF-DISCIPLINE.**

For this is the indispensable condition of our coming off victorious at the last in that great conflict. "Every one," says St. Paul, "that striveth for the mastery **IS TEMPERATE IN ALL THINGS.**" The end which he desires, which is the victor's crown, and the struggle for which he has entered himself, determine for him the use of all those preparatory exercises by which alone he can obtain success. The one cannot be supposed without the other. You know how thoroughly the wrestlers of old did this. Ten months of careful training was not thought

too much to make the body supple, and the will indomitable. And how they strengthened themselves thereby you know. So much so that "a wrestler's health" became a proverb to indicate a vigour that nothing could oppose. And from the self-denial herein displayed, the sages of antiquity drew their exhortations to moral discipline. "Do you wish to come off conqueror in the Olympic games?" says Epicetetus, "So truly do I also; for it is a glorious thing. But look well to the things which must precede such a victory, before you touch a work like this. You must submit yourself to rule and discipline. You must eat by prescription, not by appetite. You must abstain from delicacies. You must exercise yourself at stated hours whether you will or no; in the heat of summer and the cold of winter. You must not refresh yourself with cooling drinks nor generous wine, but as they are permitted you. In a word, you must give yourself up wholly to the trainer as to a physician; and then, after all, there is the struggle itself to come.—So then, O wrestler for

virtue, look well to the work you take in hand. Study your own spirit. Examine your powers. Think you that you can with such an object before you eat and drink and humour yourself, like other men? Must you not abstain from sleep? must you not labour? must you not come out from among your family and friends,* be despised by your inferiors, and sink below the world around you, in honour, in power, in the enjoyment of your rights,† in every petty business of this life? Look well to these things—count the cost—

* Compare 2 Cor. vi. 17. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord." Matt. x. 35. "I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's foes shall be they of his own household."

† Compare Matt. v. 25, 39, 40. "Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him."—"I say unto you that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also."

consider whether you are willing to barter them all for calm of soul, for freedom, for tranquillity. *One man* you must become, not two. You must determine to be either good or bad—either to give your care and labour to your soul, your self, or to what is not your self—either to expend your skill upon the things within you, or upon the things without you; that is, either to take rank with philosophers or with the vulgar crowd.” And so similarly Plato writes, “Many who desire to conquer in the fight, the course, and similar contests, have had courage enough to abstain from things which the herd of men count pleasurable; shall our children not have energy enough to deny themselves for a much more glorious victory?”

And shall the Christian, then, be less decided than the heathen moralist? Shall his views be less lofty, his efforts less systematic? Consider, it is a *character* we need to form, and this character must be wrought out by ourselves. It is the grand distinction of our nature as intelligent beings—men, not brutes,—

that, as we are responsible for our character, so are we capable of working on our minds to form that character. And on our own self-discipline the work depends. For character consists in the prevailing and habitual determinations ; and for determinations to prevail and to become habitual they must have been strengthened by continual repetition and exercise. God himself, it is true, most graciously supplies the occasions for much of this necessary discipline. By his various providences he tries our feeble faith, and strengthens it in the trial. In the fire of affliction he hardens the metal of which he means to make a vessel unto honour, meet for the master's use. By many a blow, severe in mercy, he produces a re-action of faith and prayer. But still the work must be also made our own. In proportion, perhaps, as it is so, are we spared the severer discipline of outward trial. It is essential to the training of the mind that it become co-worker with all other things. We cannot merely be acted on, we must act with. God, therefore, works, not simply *on* the will but *in*

the will and *by* the will, and notwithstanding all his inward influences we may not say that it is HE who works our holiness, but rather we ourselves who work that holiness *by Him*. Else were there no distinction between a person and a thing. Else were exhortation a mockery, and conscience but a name.

How then must this personal self-training be accomplished ?

The first thing necessary is that you *know yourself*. Self-knowledge is the condition of self-control. The heedless, the pre-occupied, the man who is not at home within, how can he understand his moral wants and set about supplying them ? He may have a vague sense of deficiency, a desire of improvement, but what shall he *resolve upon* and pray for and attempt ? Of his besetting sins, his constitutional tendencies, his special dangers, he is ignorant. And how can he provide against them ? overcome them ? Whenever, then, you fall (and who, alas ! falls not ?), be not content with self-humiliation and a cry for mercy, but ask yourself deliberately, " What has caused

this fall? Not merely what person or thing or circumstance external to myself, has been the occasion of the fall; but what previous state of mind, what general habit or impulse in myself have prepared the way to it? How might it have been prevented? What was the point of departure, at which my heart began to steal off from the right line and rush forward into sin?" For nothing is truer than that profound remark, that to know a man you must learn what his objects in general are; what he habitually desires, habitually pursues; and thence deduce his Impulses, which are for the most part the efficient causes of his conduct, the antecedents, without which motives presented to him from external things do not become his motives.* It is not so much in outward circumstances, persons, or events, that our spiritual danger lies; but in *the relation of our minds towards them*. We ourselves make the temptation by the susceptibility of being tempted. Fire will inflame only an inflammable substance. And the specific kind of

* Coleridge. Remains, i. 297.

inflammability is different in different hearts. And consequently the very first condition of self-government is to be well acquainted with your specific inflammability. The weak points of the citadel must be surveyed in order to be fortified. The knowledge of your feebleness is essential to your strength. Study therefore your own heart. Your friends can soon discover its particular tendencies. Be not less sharp-sighted yourself. Examine what are your most spontaneous likings and dislikings ; what most readily moves you to desire or hope or fear ; in what direction runs the current of your thoughts and feelings when left entirely to itself ; what *class* of considerations is most powerful over you ; what are the habits of your soul. So shall you learn how to assail the particular and perhaps momentary sin, in the general and permanent disposition to that sin. So shall you, not merely lop away some ungraceful branches but lay the axe of reformation to the very root of evil. " Search me, O God, and know my heart ; try me and know my thoughts ; and see if there be any

wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!"

But then secondly, you must *watch over yourself*. That is, not merely long for and resolve on holiness, but be careful of the intermediate steps which, by God's help and blessing, shall lead on to that holiness. It is not enough for me to know and feel my diseased condition. It is not enough to *wish* to be more healthy. It is not enough to send with readiness, yea eagerness, for a physician. I must be watchful to pursue those rules of diet and regimen, which are means (sometimes perhaps very remote, but not the less needful means) to the desired end. It is this practical determination to *something*; this actual setting in motion *something*; which distinguishes *will* from mere desire. Desire would have the end, but overlooks or shrinks from the means. Will determines the means, through all their sequence, when it chooses the end. It is not the weak crying of a child for a present object, to be bestowed on it outright. It is the foresight and contrivance of a man for a future end,

which he resolves to achieve for himself at last. I may not be able to gain the mastery over myself in the first yearning of my heart for excellence, but I *am* able to do some one thing, however seemingly remote from my desired end, which shall serve to me as the first step of a series of endeavours that shall terminate in that mastery. A youth cannot read in a moment a foreign language because he happens to be seized with an earnest desire for it. But he can *will* to read that language in due time, and so willing can without a moment's delay begin its alphabet. The spendthrift who had formed his resolution to regain his lost estates, had *formed his plan too* at the same time, which he instantly began to execute. And by promptly seizing every opportunity for obtaining the smallest pittance, he realized *at last* the sum he needed.*

Begin then, with your purpose of contending for the crown, the immediate steady watchful practice of every method which may train you for the victory. Form at once rules for the

* See Foster's Essays.

regulation of your mind, your disposition, your conduct ; repeat to yourself those rules from day to day ; examine yourself by those rules from night to night ; pray over the omissions failures and defects which thus will be brought full before your conscience ; renew your vows of fresh endeavour before Him who sees the secret struggles of the earnest mind ; seek perseveringly the power of His Spirit to strengthen you with all might in the inner man ; and you will find the same gracious Father who has put into your mind good desires, enabling you by his continual help to bring the same to good effect. But it is only by *resolves* thus formed, recorded, and renewed, that you can build up against the insidious current of sin, the breakwater of moral law. Self-will must be met at every point by *God's will*, till it be effectually pressed back. The strictness of our rules may indeed be relaxed in proportion as the habits we need become consolidated, but on the slightest enfeeblement of those habits the rules by which they were first formed must be renewed. Without this constant watchful-

ness, endeavours once commenced will soon grow languid, and plans of conduct vigorously conceived will lose their force and life. "I said I will *take heed to my ways*, that I offend not with my tongue."*

* Much assistance may be gained for the practice of Christian watchfulness from the ninth chap. of Doddridge's *Rise and Progress*. See also some valuable "*Hints on Self-examination*," by Mr. Stowell, published by the Religious Tract Society. The following memorial lines may also be useful for nightly recollection :

Did I this morn devoutly pray
For God's assistance through the day?
And did I read his holy word,
To make my life therewith accord?
Felt I as one redeem'd from earth,
And made God's child by heavenly birth?
Has Jesu's love my soul constrain'd,
And his own Spirit in me reign'd?
Did I my time and thoughts engage
As suits my calling, station, age?
Did I to all men freely give
What I would fain from them receive?
Did I my own self-love subdue,
And think the pure, the just, the true
Did I with care my temper guide,
Checking ill-humour, anger, pride?

Next let me pray you, if you would maintain the moral conflict which you are engaged in, *nourish yourself* habitually with those heavenly truths and spiritual consolations which are provided for you in the Gospel of Christ. For it were vain to attempt to repress the evil tendencies which we have by nature, if we do not sedulously nourish the good tendencies which are begotten in us by grace. Evil is to good as darkness to light. And all repression of evil depends upon the progress of good. Man must be ennobled, not so much by rooting up his lower nature as by unfolding his higher. It is the *positive* of the new life in Christ which will best work negatively on the old life of Adam. It is only as we are "nourished up in the words

And from each word my lips refrain
That might a fellow creature pain ?
Did I with cheerful patience bear
The little ills we all must share ?
For all God's mercies through the day
Did I my grateful tribute pay ?
And do I, now that day is o'er,
His pardoning grace again implore ?

of faith and of good doctrine," that we shall be firm against temptation and vigorous for holiness. And were we indeed careful with respect to this point, all other directions would be almost superfluous. It is the law of *the Spirit*, of life in Christ Jesus which alone can make us free from the law of sin and death. It is *through the Spirit* that we must mortify the deeds of the flesh. It is the knowledge, experience, and practical use of the *Gospel of Christ*, which is the power of God unto salvation. Do you know the *truth* of God in Christ? How he sent his Son to die for you, to blot out your iniquities, to give to you the blessed hope of everlasting life? And do you feel the *love* of God in Christ, applying this blessed truth to your conscience, condescending to your infirmities, soothing your despondency, and speaking peace to your soul? And do you enjoy the *presence* of God through Christ, shedding a light from heaven through your mind, and tinging every object with the brightness of his favour? Then, so long as this truth and feeling and enjoyment

are kept vivid in your mind, you will be "*strong in the Lord and in the power of his might*;" the Spirit of God will stir within you as it stirred in Samson, and you will burst the cords of sin "even as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire!"

But lastly let me say to you, *Mistrust yourself*. Through every moment of your conflict and in the fullest tension of your energies, remember that you have no sufficiency of yourself, but your sufficiency is of God. The struggle which you are engaged in is a perilous one. The enemy with whom you wrestle is always on the alert. The sinful in you is not cast out: it is only over-mastered. The old man is not dead; he is only "kept under," as a pugilist buffets down his adversary. And, therefore, you must put on the whole armour of God if you would stand against the wiles of the devil. It is the most *implicitly dependent* Christian who will be the most victorious one. He who feels most his radical depravity, weakness, treachery, will most effectually struggle against Sin. How constantly

when the Christian wrestler advances to the combat confiding in himself, he falls—disgusted and disgraced! Or, when he tries to stir himself to energy, can only fret his feverish spirit into a convulsive effort. But when in every movement that he makes, he simply feels around him for the arms of his invisible supporter, and presses gently and beseechingly on the strength of God, O what a new life steals throughout his soul, and lifts him up above himself! When most he feels his weakness then is he most strong, for then his Saviour's strength is perfected in that weakness.

And with this Saviour then begin and carry on the battle of life! Throw off before all things, by a living faith in his atonement, that burden of guilt which otherwise will clog your every effort and press you down into despair. Go forth to the struggle, not as a condemned and shackled slave but as a pardoned liberated freeman. Maintain through every vicissitude the spirit of adoption, the feeling of God's presence, the hope of victory. And then you shall be able to meet the strength

and threats of Satan even as the stripling David, bold in his humility, met the giant enemy of God,—“ I come to thee *in the name of the Lord of Hosts*; and this day will the Lord deliver thee into my hand, that all the earth may know that the battle is the Lord's !”

CHAPTER IV.

LIFE A BLESSING.

THERE is a distinction, of great importance yet too often overlooked, between the Imperfection of earthly things, and their Defectiveness—between their insufficiency to satisfy the cravings of our spiritual nature, and their positive faultiness. And it is from the want of this distinction that just those sects, both philosophical and religious, which have been willing to cherish the highest ideas of a spiritual world, have, at the same time, looked down on the world of sense as radically evil. From the Persian Magi, down through the Essenes, the Gnostics, and the Manichæans, to the present day, matter has been too readily reprobated, as not simply inferior but opposed to mind—as utterly incompatible with holiness—as not merely to be mistrusted and kept subordinate but to be hated and destroyed. In a word,

the things of this life in all their compass and variety,—the body with which we are clothed,—the world which we inhabit,—the external objects which impress our senses and produce in us pleasure or pain,—all are to be regarded by the unearthly, ethereal, spiritual man, as unmixed evil; the product of another than God; the Devil himself.

It was to the working of this leaven that St. Paul was obliged to address himself when he wrote to the Colossians, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit;”—when he declared to Timothy so expressly, “*Every creature of God is good*, and nothing to be refused if it be received with thanksgiving;”—and when he added, as utterly contrary to the views of those who would make religion itself a source of gloom and present wretchedness, “Godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of *the life that now is*, and of that which is to come.”

To such an aspect, then, of Human life would I now turn your attention—as a period which though one of imperfection, difficulty,

trial, yea and sin, is nevertheless irradiated with many a gleam of heavenly light, and may be by the Christian rejoiced in as *a blessing from his God*. Yes! notwithstanding its fleeting character as a temporary Pilgrimage—and the activity which it demands as a Race towards heaven—yea and the struggle which it involves as a Conflict with sin,—yet nevertheless, Human life is still to be regarded and rejoiced in as a blessing, an inestimable BLESSING!

For in the first place, GOD HIMSELF HAS CONSTITUTED LIFE TO BE A BLESSING. When he had finished his creation “God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good.” And though sin has now marred that perfectness and has entwined with every good a correlative evil, yet still the purposes for which things were created are the same,—the tendencies with which they are endued are the same,—and their use is still blessed, though by their misuse we turn them into a curse.

For what is plainly the intention of *all material things*? To be to us the source of

good, and not of evil. Amidst the countless contrivances of the All-wise mind which meet us on every side, and which, the more we investigate nature, become the more apparent to us, we see nothing that has not a benevolent object; all are constituted for our good.*

And what, again, is the object of our *bodily organization*? Not merely the due working of the system according to the organic ends proposed to it; but its so working as to furnish us, over and above those ends, enjoyment. Processes in their own nature insensible are rendered sentient, expressly for the purpose of producing pleasure by their operation. And thus we see the production of pleasure, not only altogether gratuitous, vouchsafed for its own sake as an ultimate object, but interwoven with the thread of existence and secured by the actions that build up and support the very frame-work of our being.†

* I need scarcely refer to Paley's beautiful Chapter on the Divine Benevolence, in his "Moral Philosophy."

† See Dr. S. Smith's "Philosophy of Health." I. iii.

But what is this to the enjoyment which our gracious Father has provided for by our *intellectual constitution*? Objects which have a general tendency to good, and which produce that good to the inferior animals without their being conscious of any special gratification in the perception of those objects, are made to man, over and above their use, the source of ever-varying and ever-enlarging delight. The useful in nature would of itself show fully the Divine benevolence; but the beautiful in nature, and the capacity vouchsafed to man of perceiving and delighting in that beauty, what does such a provision declare to us but that God holds out and would have us gratefully accept, enjoyment, as one of the great ends of our being? Why has he thrown over his creation such lovely hues—breathed into it such exquisite fragrance—adorned it with the delicate blossom, and the splendid flower, as well as stocked it with the foodful fruit—but that he has in view our delight as well as sustenance, and would have us not only thank him as dependents on his bounty, but adore him as

intelligent percipients of his loving skilfulness ; appreciate, admire, and extol, the mental qualities displayed in his handy-work, the wisdom and grace and beauty and sublimity, which Mind alone can see and feel ?

Yet not even this so manifests the gracious purpose of God towards man, as the enjoyments which he has had in view in endowing us with our *social nature*. He has sent us into the world not merely to fulfil our duties amidst our fellow men, but in that fulfilment to find the exercise, and therewith the gratification, of the most delightful sympathies. What we are and may enjoy by ourselves alone, is not a thousandth part of what we are designed to be and to enjoy in connection with our brethren. And as the development of our character, the usefulness of our existence, our very growth up to our proper maturity as men, depend on our social position so at the same time by this social position is a new and higher happiness produced. All that is good in itself becomes doubly good by being shared with others. All that is pleasurable is enhanced by reciprocation. Not

only does the mechanism of social life work out for us an indescribable amount of benefit, but in that very working it throws around us a delightful fragrance. "God has given us richly all things to enjoy!"

Yet what is even this compared with the result of that *religious capacity*, by which we become conscious of our relation not only to each other as children of one family, but to our God as the common Father of us all—the Creator of all we see—the Giver of all we make use of—the source of all we enjoy? It is not of the exercise nor of the development of this faculty, that I now speak; but it is of the design of God in enduing us with such a faculty at all; in making us capable of recognising the hand that sustains us, and looking up with gratitude into the countenance of Him who smiles upon us. For this conduces, and is intended to conduce, as much to our happiness as to our holiness. Piety, and the capacity for Piety, is not more essential to the regulation of our will than to the satisfaction of our nature. It is indispensable not only for our salvation but our blessed-

ness. O that the thoughtless and earthly-minded would consider this! O that they would learn to be ashamed of their prejudices against Piety as if it were the enemy of their natural cheerfulness, the destroyer of their peace! Nothing is more mistaken—nothing more false. It is not for the next world only that Religion provides. It is not at the sacrifice of this life that we are called to purchase the life to come. “In the *way* of righteousness” as well as at its termination “there is life.” And there is more evidence of God’s intending this life to be a blessing to us, in his creating us to know and love and serve Him even here; than there is in all the other proofs, however copious, put together. Then above all, then only, is every creature of God good, and nothing to be refused, yea rather to be received with thanksgiving, when it is “sanctified by the word of God and prayer.”

But then, if God himself has constituted life to be a blessing, it follows, in the second place, that AS A BLESSING WE MAY GRATEFULLY ENJOY IT.

I know not how it is, but I do fear that there sometimes insinuates itself into the pious mind, a notion that we ought not to rejoice in the works of God's hands. That sin has so defiled them that they are to be to us now objects rather of aversion than delight. That the evil heart of man must so *unavoidably* misuse them that it is dangerous, if not unlawful, to attempt their proper use. The corruption which is seated in our fallen nature, is transferred to the inanimate things with which that fallen nature is conversant. We attribute to them by association the character of the rational beings who pervert them, and we bring them in guilty of our own crimes. But assuredly it is not things that are corrupt. It is the men who use those things. Things are in themselves indifferent. They have no moral character. They become what, by our use, we make of them. As from the same piece of iron may be formed the useful ploughshare or the destructive sword, so all the gifts of God, in nature, in society, in mind, are constituted good or evil, not in themselves but by our use of them. Nay more, they are

given to us *solely to be good*. They are designed exclusively for good. For our *right* use of them they are set before us, and in that right use we are called on to enjoy them.

Observe how many are the injunctions in the word of God, to rejoice in all those things which he has constituted for our good.

Has He given to us *physical blessings*? all that the earth yields to support our animal life? He has given them not for our sustenance only but enjoyment. "God," said St. Paul to the people of Lystra, "left not himself without witness, in that he did good and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food *and gladness*." "Thou shalt *rejoice*," said Moses to the Israelites, "in every good thing which the Lord thy God hath given unto thee and unto thine house; thou and the Levite and the stranger that is among you." And again, "Thou shalt bestow thy money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after—and thou shalt eat before the Lord thy God, and thou shalt *rejoice*, thou and thine household."

And has God given us *mental endowments*?

all the faculties which find their exercise and gratification in knowledge and judgment and taste? These too he has given for our enjoyment. "Wisdom," says Solomon, "is as good as an inheritance; and by it there is profit to them that see the sun. For wisdom is a defence even as money is a defence; but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it." Eccl. vii. 11, 12. "For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight, wisdom and knowledge and joy." Eccl. ii. 26. Not only, observe, wisdom and knowledge; but as a blessed fruit and consequence to be derived from them—*joy*.

And has our gracious Father added to our physical and mental gifts the blessings of *social comfort*? competency, friendship, the sweet interchanges of affection, the amenities of life? These, too, we are called on to rejoice in and to use with thankfulness. "It is *good and comely*," says the word of God, "for one to eat and drink and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life which God giveth him; for it is his

portion. Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; *this is the gift of God*. For he shall not much remember the days of his life; because God answereth him in the joy of his heart." Eccl. v. 18—20.

In which sense therefore, and as commending the same spirit, must be understood another passage of the Book of Ecclesiastes—"Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." (xi. 9.) This is not the place for critical discussion of the passage. Suffice it, to say that any supposed ironical threat conveyed by it is at variance with the gravity and the benevolence of didactic writing; is contradicted by the many general exhortations which this same book contains to use the gifts of God with thankfulness;* and is rejected by such men as

* See Eccl. iii. 12, 13, 22: v. 18: vii. 14: ix. 7, 10.

Luther and St. Jerome. God, therein, calls his children to rejoice in all the blessings he has set before them, and at the same time points out to them how they may do so without sin and danger. He would have them exercise the natural feelings and affections of their hearts, and with this exercise has connected their purest pleasures. And the very sense of *life*—the very joy, so rich, so sparkling, so inexplicable, of youthful vigour ; when the sun shines bright upon our path, and the freshness of the morning breathes around us, and every object glistens as with the dew of heaven ; this blessed flow of youthful spirits and buoyant energy He would have us to exult in, and to make the most of, for his glory and our good. So far from being too contented with these pure emotions, the heart of fallen man is not contented enough with them. So far from enjoying them as we ought, it is because men do not know how much enjoyment they can yield, that they spurn the tranquil pleasure of possession for the feverish excitement of pursuit ; and not appreciating the *quality* of

what lies within their grasp, imagine to themselves felicity only in that infinite and unattainable *quantity* which stretches out beyond them. If we delighted, as we ought, in simple natural enjoyments, we should not crave and labour as we do for complicated artificial ones. If we learned to cultivate the pure *cheerfulness* which flows from just the simple *exercise*, within the circle of their several laws, of the animal the mental and the social sensibilities, we should not grasp so readily at the intoxicating *pleasure* which for a moment froths up from the excessive (and because excessive, guilty,) *excitement* of those sensibilities. He who knows how to enjoy what God himself has given him, will be fore-armed against the fascinations which the devil spreads out before him;

“ For that which is not good is not delicious
To a well governed and wise appetite.”

My dear young friends :—God has prepared for you, even as he did for your first parents, a pure delight which flows forth from the constitution of your being, and the adaptation to it of external things ; a paradise of natural sweets ;

“every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food;” and he has said to you, by his providence and by his word, “Of every tree of this garden thou mayest freely eat.” Pluck then, with adoring gratitude these permitted sweets, and then shall no wily serpent of unlawful desire insinuate himself into your heart—then shall no bad example of malignant tempters prevail on you to lift your eyes and to put forth your hand for *more* than God has given you, and thus to lose and be expelled from what he has not denied you! You are not doomed to gloom and terror and despondency, but “*Rejoice*, O young man, in thy youth and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth!” You are not commanded to crush with suicidal austerity your natural affections, but, “Walk in the ways of thine heart* and in the sight of thine eyes”—enjoy the

* For a similar use of this phrase in a good sense, see Ps. xxxvii. 4. “Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee *the desire of thine heart*.” Ps. xx. 4. “The Lord grant thee *according to thine own heart*, and fulfil all thy counsel.”



glorious objects which the world of nature presents to thee from without, indulge the glow of heart-emotion which the world of mind stirs up within, *only with this one thought* pervading regulating harmonizing all, "know thou that for all these things God shall bring thee into judgment;" recollect, amidst your every enjoyment, *that great law of retribution* which God has established in all things, to give notice of and check and punish their abuse. Just as Tertullian, when repelling on the part of the early Christians the reproach of selfish moroseness, though he concedes that they partook not of the *evil* pursuits of the heathen around them, their idolatrous customs and public spectacles, yet declares, "We are not, however, like the Brahmins and Faqueers of India, flying from the duties of life to wander in the woods, for *we do not forget that we owe a life of thanksgiving to Him who made us*; and we therefore refuse not any of the fruits of his bounty; we only take care that in their enjoyment we offend not either by excess or by misuse." All things are to be enjoyed, but

they must be enjoyed *in God*. All things may be used by us, but only with a sensitive attention to the notices which they themselves afford of every the least approximation to *misuse*. The injunction is so important that Solomon repeats it; but the *limitation* under which it must be obeyed is so equally essential that this also he reiterates in another form in the succeeding context. "Remove sorrow from thine heart, and put away evil from thy flesh;"—there is the renewed injunction not to be cast down into a murmuring moroseness by all the evils and the dangers of this sinful state (yea even though "childhood and youth are vanity," a fleeting breath); but—nevertheless, "*Remember thy Creator* in the days of thy youth;"—there is the renewed indication of the *condition*, under which alone that injunction can be safely followed out.

To this condition then I now go on, and beg you to observe in the third place, that though our gracious God has constituted life to be a blessing, and therefore as a blessing we

-may gratefully enjoy it, yet THIS VERY ENJOYMENT WILL BE FOUND BY US, ONLY AS WE USE ITS BLESSINGS WITH CONSTANT REFERENCE TO GOD; receiving them as given from God—holding them as lent by God—employing them as appointed by God—and improving them as trusts for which we must account to God.

Receive then every blessing of life as *given you from God*. So only can you understand its proper character and use. It is because men so forget the Giver that they abuse the gift. The inconsiderate, or perhaps untaught, young person is flung into a world of attractive objects which not only solicit his attention, but would rivet that attention on themselves alone. He finds himself endued with gifts of mind and body which he has been accustomed to call his own—entirely his own. And therefore, the mere pride of possession, the mere wilfulness of power, impel him to abuse these gifts and play with them according to his will. But recollect that, while the blessings are put into your hands, the *authority to use them as you*

please is not made over to you. They are not your own. They come from Him who made you and made them and made their fitness for your happiness, and who by the very same act prescribed the *mode and measure* in which alone they can contribute to that happiness. If then you use them in contempt or even in ignorance of this mode and measure, you use them to your ruin. "Remember therefore **THY CREATOR** in the days of thy youth." Remember that you yourself, and all things round you, are the property of the Supreme; you hold entirely of Him. "When thou hast eaten and art full," said Moses to the Israelites, "then thou shalt bless *the Lord thy God* for the good land *which he hath given thee*." "Beware that thou forget not the *Lord thy God*,—lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses and dwelt therein, and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied and all that thou hast is multiplied, then thine heart be lifted up and thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth; but *thou*

shalt remember the Lord thy God, for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth."

Next I would say, *Hold all the blessings of life as lent to you by God.* Not only are they gifts but they are gifts, too, merely *for a time.* They are not permanent endowments but temporary supplies. They are not the rest and the inheritance to which you are called; they are only sustenance by the way. Therefore while you are thankful for them, do not depend on them; while their presence affords you comfort, take care that their absence shall not cause you sorrow. For God bestows them only for such a time and under such circumstances as He sees best for you. And immediately he withdraws, diminishes, or changes them, *believe* that they are no longer good for you. You may rejoice in them when given, but do not long for them when taken away. Is health, for instance, a blessing? And have you it vouchsafed to you? Enjoy it, praise God for it. But is health withdrawn? Then no longer is it a blessing *for you.* Therefore care not for it,—*care not* anxiously and wish-

fully for it. You may find in its denial a thousand advantages such as its bestowment never would have yielded you. It is not that God wishes to bless you less, but that he means (and he will do it if you trust in him) to bless you *in another way*. And just similarly, have you competency, reputation, friends? Let them move your gratitude but not enslave your affections. Hold them loosely, as one who may every moment be called upon to let them drop. "The time is short. It remaineth, therefore, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy as though they possessed not; and they that use this world as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away!"

Again, let me say, *Employ the blessings of life as appointed by God*. He that gave them to you knows best their qualities and capabilities; and he has established in them checks which render them self-regulating. The physical laws which govern matter, at once give notice of and punish every infraction of them.

The organic laws give signal of misuse by pain. The laws of conscience smite the mind which violates them. Even the laws of society, conventional and variable as they sometimes are, yet cannot be flagrantly or perseveringly outraged without sooner or later avenging themselves on the offender. And all these are the voice of God. They tell us (and with very delicate discrimination, if we would but listen to them,) how he would have us use, to what extent, with what restraints, and under what conditions, the various blessings which he puts into our hands. God thus gives us richly all things to enjoy, yet at the same time for our use of all things "brings us into judgment;" a judgment which already is carrying on however imperfectly through every instant, and which will be completed with a perfect retribution at the last great day. And this great fact then, we are to "know;" to recollect it, to be alive to the very first intimations of it, to regulate ourselves according to it, to advance, recede or change our course, in all our occupations and pursuits, according

to its just, though frequently minute and delicate, indication. Herein consists the wisdom of the Christian. Hereby he learns God's will, and comes to balance himself according to that will. Even as the body yields and turns and bends itself almost instinctively to the law of gravity, and thus maintains its equilibrium, so will the watchful and well-exercised spirit accommodate itself spontaneously to the law of retribution, and thus maintain its holiness and peace;—sober without severity—pleased without being enchanted—cheerful without levity—energetic without effort—quiet without indolence—possessing all things, but possessed by none. For spiritual health and happiness are like corporeal. Both are more frequently undermined by the gradual operation of constant though disregarded causes than even by great and sudden attacks; and both, therefore, are more effectually preserved by a judicious and steady observance of their *ordinary laws* of being, than by any exclusive (and because exclusive faulty) attention to any one particular function of

that being. Holiness, and therefore happiness, is not something strained and out of course, but it is *the keeping all things even and in course.*

But once more : if you would find life indeed a source of enjoyment, *improve its blessings as trusts for which you must account to God.* There is not only a present judgment going on, but the grand Idea of retribution shall at last receive its perfect manifestation. The notices of this great truth which things give out even here, are only imperfect warnings and anticipations of its full display hereafter. "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap ; for he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption ; but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing, for *in due season we shall reap* if we faint not." And this connection of things present with things future bears with mighty force upon our right employment of the gifts entrusted to us. Our heavenly Master has enjoined, in the very act of putting them into

our care, "Occupy till I come;" when he returns he will "command us to be called unto him that he may know how much every man has gained by trading;" and he has solemnly said that "unto every one that hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away."

And this great principle being remembered, so far from throwing gloom upon the life now present, will open out on it the sunshine of the life to come. It will add to the composure of possession, the interest (and that too in a right direction) of pursuit. And thus it will realize the full idea of happiness; which is neither possession without pursuit (for this soon cloy), nor yet pursuit without possession (for this soon wearies), but a continual progression from one point of attainment towards another,—an energizing through the whole existence,—not with the feverish anxiety of desire, but with the healthy glow of exercise according to our powers. The Christian is thus the only man who can be contented here, although not satisfied—who can feel the insuffi-

ciency of earth, and yet not murmur at it. His longing for a better world will not degenerate into a disgust of this. Nor will he think to gain that better world by slothfully or fanatically throwing aside the occupations of this. For observe, it is not by declining or throwing up the gifts that God has entrusted to us, that we shall best prepare for the account that we must give to Him. We must not count him like "a hard man," and therefore hide our talent in the earth; we must not so dread the abuse as to reject the use of what he has put into our hands. But we must so improve the present as to make it tell upon the future; extending to everything we possess that general principle by which our Lord and his Apostle regulate our use of earthly wealth. "Make to yourselves friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness," says Jesus, "that when ye fail they may receive you into everlasting habitations."—"Charge them who are rich in this world," says St. Paul, (and this last passage combines in it almost every rule I have suggested,) "that they be not high-minded nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living

God who giveth us richly all things to enjoy ; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate ; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life !”

But one thing let me add on this whole subject. Forget not, I beseech you, that there is one general indispensable condition, without which Life can never be a blessing. The first thing needful to the right use of the blessings we possess is *a heart at peace with God*. For it is only as the *thought of God* pervades and colours our view of all things round us, that we can truly enjoy them. It is only as the *thought of God* regulates our use of all things, that we can safely enjoy them. But this thought of God can never become mixed up with our habitual views and feelings and volitions, *unless that thought be welcomed by us* ; unless, in a word, we have sought and found and are maintaining in our daily life, a *sense of reconciliation with God* as our Father and our Friend. And whence can you gain this sense of reconciliation, but by looking to His

Son as your Saviour and Atonement? How can you seek it without a penitent surrender of yourself into his hands to be his child? How can you maintain it from day to day but by the exercise of faith and prayer? No other subject can be profitable to us, but as this of *Reconciliation with God by Christ* is implied, is taken for granted, is mixed up with it all. And O then suffer me to ask, How stand your mind and heart with reference to this? Are you a penitent believer? a new creature in Christ Jesus? an obedient child of God? When exhorted to rejoice in all the blessings that God has given you, are you already "*rejoicing in Christ Jesus?*" Or are you looking out of yourself to things around you for enjoyment, because you cannot find it within yourself, and are not disposed to *seek* it within yourself? Alas! if this should be, there are other topics than the blessedness of life which must be pressed upon you. There is the awful call and censure of the prophet which must not be concealed from you. "The Lord God of Hosts *calls to weeping and mourning*, and to baldness, and to

girding with sackcloth ; and, behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine : let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die !”

Let such then *begin with God*, if ever you would truly enjoy the gifts of God. Begin with penitent sorrow if you would have real gladness. Incline your heart to God’s testimonies and not to covetousness. Turn away your eyes from beholding vanity, and make much of God’s law. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness ; and then all things shall be added to you, and you shall find a blessing in all. Christ came to die for your salvation. Christ calls for your grateful faith and love. Christ demands your heart and life to be devoted to his service. Christ can shed abroad in your soul the peace of God which passeth understanding. And then, *and not till then*, may you truly safely and richly “rejoice in all that you shall put your hands unto.”—“Light is sown *for the righteous*, and gladness for the upright in heart.”—“*Rejoice in the Lord ye righteous*, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness !”

CHAPTER V.

LIFE A SEED-TIME FOR ETERNITY.

IN seeking to press on the inquiring mind the proper use of Life I have exhibited its Transitoriness as a Pilgrimage,—the Activity which it demands as a Race,—the Struggle which it involves as a Conflict,—and the Blessing which it may become to us if God's presence be realized in its possessions and pursuits.

There is yet one more aspect in which the Scriptures set it before us, which connects the present with the future, the visible with the invisible, more awfully than any former one ; —I mean that of A SEED-TIME FOR ETERNITY. "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption ; but he that soweth

to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting."

Now the principle here laid down is this : *That there is an inseparable connection between the several stages of our being.* No particle of thought or feeling or will, stands alone. Each separate habit, and the whole cluster of habits which constitutes our character, has either its formation or stability affected by every single act of the mind. And even as the child is father of the man, so the man of to-day is father of the man of to-morrow and the next day onward, even out of time into eternity. Circumstances the most trifling as considered in themselves, assume an inexpressible importance when looked on in their relative influence, as seeds of a wide-spreading plant of bitterness or of fragrance, as the first term of an increasing series which may run on in inconceivable progression towards an infinity of bliss, or an infinity of woe.* I touch not now on the over-ruling providence of God, and the

* See this illustrated in Dr. Moore's "Power of the Soul over the Body." p. 171—183.

divine interposition of effectual grace to turn the currents of the soul even as He will ; but I point you to the natural *tendency* of our present state of mind, whatever it may be, to propagate itself throughout our future being : and I pray you to consider the bearing of this principle on your prospects, according as you may happen to be an unconverted,—or a careless,—or a diligent Christian.

Apply the principle to the UNCONVERTED CHRISTIAN. Alas that such a contradiction in terms should be ! A Christian—and yet unconverted ! A consecrated one—and yet unholy ! With the cross of Christ upon your brow—yet not the spirit of Christ in your heart ! But nevertheless, so it has been and so it is. It was so with God's people of old. They searched the Scriptures, for in them they thought they had eternal life, and yet our Lord declared to them, " I know you that ye have not *the love of God* in you." It was so among the Ephesian Christians. " She that liveth in pleasure," says the Apostle, " is dead while she

liveth." It was so in the Church of Sardis. "I know thy works that thou hast a name to live and art dead." Is it so, peradventure, with you who now are reading this book?

Then, if so, let me earnestly though affectionately ask you, *What must be the tendency of your present state?* Whither can you be drifting but towards a constantly increasing DISTANCE from God—and NEARNESS to destruction?

For *Distance from God*—alienation from the love and service of Him who made us—is the radical evil of the unrenewed heart. Amidst all the various *forms* of ungodliness, herein lies its *essence*. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," i.e. earthly, worldly, sensual; as opposed to God who is heavenly and spiritual. And in proportion therefore as any one is "sowing to the flesh," is providing for the gratification of the earthly worldly nature, in that proportion is he fostering in himself a will opposed to God, and widening the distance between his Maker and himself. It matters not, I repeat, what may be the *form* of our un-

godliness; whether gross and disgusting sin, or merely selfish and earthly worldliness. For "*all that is in the world*, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world." So that "if any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him."

O how alarming then is such a state of mind! You cannot indulge it without becoming confirmed in it. A deadening process is daily going on. An inward aversion to God is daily strengthening. Another and another ray of heavenly light is daily receding from your mind. A new link is daily adding to that chain whose constantly increasing weight—unless by a mighty effort, through the grace of God, you snap it at once asunder—is dragging you downwards into everlasting darkness! "Take heed" then I beseech you, "lest there be in you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God—lest you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin!"

For what must follow upon this? A constantly increasing *Nearness to destruction!* To

recede from God is to draw near to ruin. "He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh *reap corruption*." "Of the flesh!" Intrinsically—from within himself—from the state of soul which he has fostered in himself! From the seed sown here, must spring up the harvest hereafter. From sin must grow out misery. O inevitable development! O terrible result! And yet men speak and act as if this essential progression could be interrupted by the mere accident of death! As if the stroke which severs the body from the soul could, at the same time, sever the soul from itself; and that which changes the mortal into dust could change the sinful into holiness! As if the ingrained passions, the consolidated habits, the inveterate aversion, of a long course of ungodliness, could be in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, in the very article of death, transformed by a mechanical process, into a love of God's presence, a fitness for his glory! But what is death? A mere affection of matter; and matter cannot alter mind. The unrobing of the man; and this cannot alter the man himself.

A physical change ; and this cannot operate a moral change. The disposition with which men quit this present stage of being, that disposition must they assuredly carry on with them into the succeeding one. If the tendency of their existence be now in one direction, the mere stepping over a boundary-line cannot divert it into another direction. "He that is unjust," says the Scripture, "let him be unjust still : and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still !" Woe, woe, to the ungodly, if he go on in his ungodliness ! By the very law of his being he is heaping up for himself wrath against the day of wrath. The materials for everlasting torment he is himself accumulating. Every day he is adding fuel to the fire which shall scorch his soul. Every day he is fostering the serpent which shall sting him to eternity. Every day he is nourishing that brood of sinful passions which shall for ever prey upon their parent, and torture their progenitor ! "When lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death !"

But see the bearing of this same principle on the CARELESS CHRISTIAN. St. Paul applies it in this case, even as in the former. “He which *soweth sparingly* shall reap also sparingly.” And it affords a solemn admonition to a class of characters which is, alas! but too large. Such as the Lord reproves among the Laodiceans; “I know thy works that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.” Those whose dispositions towards God we are willing to consider good—whose will, or at least their wish, seems in a right direction—whose life is amiable;—but then, there is a languor spread over all, an easiness, almost an indifference, which, like the influence of physical coldness, the more it steals upon us renders us the more insensible to its danger, till it freezes up the soul into the heavy sleep of death.

This at least is its *tendency*; and it is against this tendency that I would warn the too-well-satisfied, indolent, creeping Christian, lest he die!

For recollect the principle with which we set out—the influence, namely, of any one state of mind upon our character and condition, both here and hereafter,—and see how spiritual sloth must tend to deaden your conscience in this life, and to lessen your blessedness in the life to come.

It must *deaden your conscience*. And this is but too easily done. Our very acquaintance with the truths of religion tends to make us careless of the life of religion. We substitute superficial acquirement for deep experience ; forms for substance ; a name and a profession for the stirring of the soul, through all her faculties, to love and serve her God.

And this tendency is fostered by the necessary imperfection of the language in which religious instruction is conveyed. The teacher is obliged to make his approaches to the heart through the mind ; and for the mind there must be given formal definitions of piety, which definitions being comprehended and assented to, the lesson, it is thought, is got ; and the learner ranks

himself at once as a proficient in the School of Christ.

Besides, religious instruction must be often incomplete as well as superficial. We have to present religion in its broader features—each one, often, separately, as the occasion may require—till the careless mind too readily adopts a *part* of the truth as *the whole* truth, and is satisfied if it can find in itself *some one mark* of conversion, unobservant of the rest. And yet this method of instruction (which indeed is the Scripture method) flows unavoidably from our anxiety to put forth only the *immediately needful* truth for each class of persons we address, and to press on them the one first indispensable step which they must take in the path which leads to heaven. Thus, if we are alarmed at the dull indifference of the unconverted sinner, we feel that there is one thing needful to him as the very first commencement of a life of holiness; and that one thing, *for the time*, is every thing in our eyes. “O that he had but some sense of sin and danger! O that he did but tremble at his guilt, and feel his need of Christ

for his salvation!" Or again, if we see some whose hearts are opening to God, then our anxiety is transferred to a further step in the Christian life. "O that there may come no *practical check* to the views and dispositions which these awakening minds are being roused to! that there may be no attempt at compromise between conviction and conduct—no halting between two opinions—no dallying with the world! O that they may step out manfully, like soldiers of the cross, and proclaim to all men whose they are and whom they serve!" But what does the self-deceiving heart deduce from this? Too often, I fear, that just those penitential feelings—or just those evangelical principles—or just that passage from one class to another in society—constitute, of themselves, Religion. "I have wept for sin—or I have thrown myself at the feet of Jesus—or I have come out from the world—and therefore the work is done,—the great change is effected,—I am safe!"

And see then, what a tendency all this has to the deadening of the conscience with reference

to the work of essential piety,—the devout and strenuous and watchful and progressive *moulding of the moral character in all its parts and actings* into the image of our Lord. The man is looking to what he *has* thought and felt and done, rather than to what remains for him to do. He is looking (worse still) to what others may think and feel and do and count sufficient, to what will pass with men; rather than to what God, the heart-searching God who is no respecter of persons, has demanded of him; to what will pass before the bar of the Most High! And thus, as long as he can keep on a level with those around him; as long as no prominent inconsistency juts out to alarm his friends or his own conscience, the little cravings of self, the secret impulses of passion, sensuality, and pride, the occasional outbreaks, even, of old sins, are borne with as no longer characteristics of our state of mind but only exceptions to its general tenor; till the good seed is choked by riches and cares and pleasures of this life, and brings *no fruit to perfection*.

And if this be the consequence of spiritual carelessness in this life, what shall be the end thereof? Can *the blessedness of the life to come* remain entirely undiminished? Are you not told that "as a man soweth, so also shall he reap?" Nay more; that not the *kind* alone of the future harvest but its *extent and copiousness*, will depend upon the tendencies of the present character? "He that soweth sparingly *shall reap also sparingly*." The servant whose pound had gained ten pounds, received authority over ten cities. But he whose pound had gained five pounds, only over five cities. For "to him that hath shall be given and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have."

And can we conceive it otherwise, according to the very first principles of reason? It is an old and weighty axiom, that whatsoever is received must be received according to the capacity of the receiver. And in the next world even as in this, can you fill a mind of one capacity with the enjoyments proper to a

mind of another capacity? Will there be no fuller measure of that righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, which constitute the blessedness of the kingdom of heaven, possessed by him whose soul has been hourly growing into closer union with his Saviour, than by him whose love is cold, whose will is wavering, who is not dwelling in the light as God is in the light, and therefore has not fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ? I do beseech you, therefore, dear young friends, be diligent, be in earnest, in religion! "Sow bountifully that you may *reap also bountifully!*" If you have "received how you ought to walk and to please God, *abound therein more and more!*" Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue,—knowledge,—temperance,—patience,—godliness,—brotherly-kindness,—charity; for if these things be in you *and abound*, they make you that you shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and so an entrance shall be ministered unto you *abundantly* into the ever-

lasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!"

Let this then be our last consideration. The bearing of this principle, that our present state contains within it the seeds of that to come, upon the DILIGENT CHRISTIAN.

Can anything be more inspiring than the thoughts which crowd upon the mind, and lift it upward and propel it forward, when we think that holiness diligently cultivated is the parent of increasing holiness onward into endless life? That the Christian character thus rises, brightens, becomes intensified, shines out in constantly increasing purity and splendour, even as the sun climbs upward from its first faint dawn on the horizon till it culminate in glory? "The path of the just is as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

For just consider how diligence in holiness tends to increase our *Love for holiness*.

Love for holiness is the first mark that unfolds itself, of true conversion to God. It is

the earliest blossom that shows the life of God to have begun to circulate through the soul. All service of God which springs only from a desire to escape punishment and obtain reward (needful as is the influence of such motives on the first awakening mind) comes short of that *regeneration of the heart*, whose one distinctive mark is *love of holiness for holiness' sake*—an opening of the mental eye to the surpassing purity, justice, goodness, of the divine law—an admiration free and spontaneous of the perfections thus revealed to us—a love of God as the being in whom those perfections dwell in all their fulness, who *is* purity, justice, goodness—and a corresponding desire to become like that BEING: to rise above our natural corruption into some participation of this purity, justice, goodness, which we admire and love.

But then, this is at first but very imperfect. It is imperfect in the *knowledge* of the law of holiness. The light of it has but just dawned upon us; it is like the morning spread upon the mountains; its very first rays are indeed exhi-

larating, but they are faint; above all they are limited—they fall not on every object within our sphere, and show not clearly every step of our path. And it is imperfect also as to the *affections* which even this dawning knowledge excites. We feel towards holiness as towards some dignified personage to whom we have been but recently introduced, with whose sentiments we are not yet familiar; we reverence, we admire, the manifestation of his character, but we are not *at home* with him.

But then, what is the result of further intimacy with such a person? of pondering on his sentiments, and applying his principles? Do we not find ourselves growing in apprehension of what he means—in application of his maxims to every fact of our experience—and in a sympathy which moulds us into similarity, with his spirit?

Now just so is it with the holy law of God. The more we give ourselves to walk in its light, the more it warms our hearts. It is the characteristic of all excellence that the better we know it the more we love it. You find this

in the things of every-day life. In literature, the more you cultivate your mind, the more you delight in cultivation of mind. In matters of taste, the deeper your proficiency the more devoted your affection. Poetry, painting, music, by whom are they so fondly appreciated as by the poet, the painter, the musician! And friendship, affection, all the charities of father son and brother, is it not by *exercise* and *according to their exercise*, that they become consolidated into habits of soul?

And O how equally true is it of spiritual knowledge—spiritual tastes—spiritual exercises of the heart towards God! “A wise man,” says holy Scripture, “will hear and will *increase learning*; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels. Give instruction to a wise man and he will be yet wiser; teach a just man and he will increase in learning.” And so says the Apostle; “As they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh,” *i.e.* as habits of sin increase our relish for sin; “so they that are after the spirit do mind the things of the spirit,” the practice

of holiness increases our relish for holiness. The more we occupy ourselves in heavenly pursuits, the more the very mind itself so occupied,—its tastes its impulses and its enjoyments—will become spiritual. The more we speak with God, like Moses, face to face, the more do we cry, like Moses, “Show me thy glory!” The more we receive of His influences, the quicker are our susceptibilities, yea and cravings, for more grace. The spirit already in the heart drinks in the spirit poured out from on high, even as the water-lily in the midst of waters lifts up its broad leaves, and expands its petals, and rejoices in the shower with a quicker sympathy than the parched shrub in the desert.

Observe next, what a tendency spiritual diligence has to increase our *ability for holiness*.

How marvellous is our deficiency in this. Redeemed into the liberty of God’s children, we nevertheless are found too generally in the condition, not of the regenerate Christian but of the struggling penitent; “the things that we would we do not, and the things that we

would not those we do." I stop not now to ask how much of this spiritual weakness is owing to our neglect of realizing the privileges of the Gospel, its child-like dependence, its victorious faith ; but I rather press on you the encouraging fact that, in proportion as you practise with whatever feebleness the holiness you love, you will find a growing facility in that practice. In the way of natural consequence, according to the general laws of the human mind, you will find that facility. Whatever we do frequently, regularly, perseveringly, we come at last to do easily. Who would suppose that such complicated things as language, arithmetic, music, could come to be practised by us almost without thought? Who at the commencement of his study of any art could foresee the ease, the dexterity, the pleasure with which he can perform its operations when he has become an adept therein? In all the faculties of body and mind, what makes the difference between the helpless infant and the full-grown man but just *the exercise of those faculties*, the daily and hourly application of

them to the objects which are fitted to draw them out ?

And just so is it with the will—the moral power of man. Our will is, alas ! accustomed to follow, from our birth, the appetites of the flesh, the impulses of the passions, the devices of the earthly nature which thinks only of self-gratification. And it is this *custom of sinning* which gives its power to SINFULNESS. It is the exercising of ourselves in ungodliness which renders it more easy for us to break through the law of God than to obey it, to violate our conscience than to reverence it. It is this which produces that bitter humiliating inconsistency, that we slide into a momentary indulgence though we know it will work us future sorrow ; that we choose self-enjoyment before self-approbation, pleasure before peace, the tumult of passion before the severer joy of duty.

But then—thanks be to God !—the very principle which works our ruin while our hearts are far from Him, *will help to our recovery* when we have returned to Him. The habits of evil

which by custom have been made easy, by custom also—the custom of watching against them, checking them, interrupting them, attacking them with the whole armour of God—may be made difficult. We may come thus to compel Sin, which once obtained such easy victories, to exhaust itself in many a struggle. We may come to render it a *laborious* thing to smother conviction, to neglect duty. We may approximate to the understanding of what St. John sets forth as the ideal of the Christian character, the model of what a Christian ought to be, (and will be in proportion as he grows in grace,)—namely, that “whosoever abideth in Jesus *sinneth not* ;” so far as the *habit* of the soul is that of communion with our Lord sin is as offensive to it, as hastily rejected by it, as the breath of corruption, the tainted air of pestilence, is nauseated by the healthy system ; so that “whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin ; for HIS (*i.e.* God’s) seed *remaineth* in him, and he *cannot sin* because he is born of God.”

Nor does the Christian, who thus dwells in

God and God in him, less *advance in holiness* than recede from sinfulness. As habits of evil are formed and matured by every indulgence, so habits of good are fostered in us by every fresh act of faith and love and obedience. That which was begun in weakness is carried on with growing power. The diligent believer learns daily more of his own heart—of his besetting sins—of his peculiar infirmities—and also of the power of his Redeemer. Each new experience of his insufficiency sends him more simply to cry to the strong for strength. Each effort in the path of life opens out to him richer prospects. Though faint, he still pursues. Though weak, he goes on climbing the arduous steep. One step in obedience gives him spring and animation for another. One difficulty overcome impels him forward with a fresh alacrity to grapple with a further one. His very exertions breathe him. His very efforts diffuse the spirit of life more fully through his soul. He rises progressively into a purer atmosphere—he gets a freer use of all his powers—he bounds with elastic foot from one point

to another in the path of life—he goes from strength to strength till he appear before his God in Zion !

Dear young Christian friends :—Use this idea of *the tendency* of all you do and think and are, to go on in the same direction, as your preservative against every temptation—the very smallest—that solicits you ; and your stimulus to every duty—the most trifling—that you are called to. Estimate things, not in themselves alone but *in their bearing on your character*. Remember that in any struggle you make, it is not a present benefit only which you have to seek by faithfulness to conscience and to God—not a particular momentary victory, merely, over that particular temptation,—but it is the *moral effect* which follows on it, as regards your whole relation to sin and holiness. What is the gaining a battle in itself ? The holding possession of a few acres of ground. But what is it in its consequences ? The settling perhaps a nation's fate. The making rebellion to hang down its head, and loyalty to triumph, for centuries to come.

Try then, by this principle, many things which you perhaps indulge, because they seem matters of indifference; many which you shrink from, because you think them ascetic and severe. Instead of questioning, "*How much* self-denial,—how much disinterestedness,—how much patience,—how much meekness,—how much love,—how much devotedness am I bound to exercise?" ask rather "*What will be the tendency* of each act and exercise of these several graces? What its influence upon my general character? Shall I give thereby one more check to sin? Add thereby one more link to the chain of holy habit? Render myself in any degree more ready, expert, *prepared* for every fresh attack of evil, and call to good?" There must be a *training for* conflict as well as actual conflict. There must be an habituating ourselves to self-control in things insignificant, that we may have *the power of self-control ready strengthened to our use* in things important. There must be the constant *practice* of all holy dispositions in the smallest matters, if we would have those dispositions

uppermost and predominant in greater ones. We shall not maintain in public, a spirit which we do not foster in private. We shall not exhibit abroad, what we are not fashioning in ourselves at home. We shall not be on the field of battle, what we have not sedulously trained ourselves to by a daily discipline. "*Exercise thyself* unto godliness."

And thus shall you enjoy (it is the last thing I suggest) those bright anticipations which the diligent believer gains, from the tendency of progressive holiness to increase to him *the blessedness of that holiness*.

We have only to recollect that all true *bles-sedness* can be no other than the maturity of *holiness*, to see that our *joy* in God must grow in proportion as our *love* and our *ability* for the service of God. "Righteousness" is not simply the *companion*, it is the *source*, of "peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." "Our rejoicing is this," says the Apostle, "the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the

world." "The good man," says the inspired proverb, "shall be satisfied *from himself*." "He that soweth to the spirit," says St. Paul, "shall *of the spirit* reap life everlasting." Amidst the trials of earth, God's service is the only unmixed joy of those who love Him. And when they shall have escaped from these trials into heaven, what is still the sum of all their blessedness? Just this, that "they are *before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple*, and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell with them!" Look back at the dim and fading past: try to recollect any one enjoyment in it which has been entirely pure and satisfactory—which leaves upon your mind the deep repose of strains gone by, whose separate notes have fled but whose rich harmony has blended with your very soul,—and you will find that nothing deserves this character but the lingering sweetness of some work of holiness,—some experience of God's presence,—some energizing in God's cause. All other delights, however innocent, are as a dream—they moved

the surface of your being, but no more. The joys of holiness—those only are deep and permanent. The blessedness of self-improvement—this only grows with us, as a part of ourselves. The well of water which Christ opens in the soul—this only sheds abroad in us those refreshing streams which *spring up into everlasting life!*

And O then the unspeakable mercy of God, to give his Son to open out in us that perennial fount! O the blessedness, if by his Spirit he has touched our stony hearts and made them to flow forth in love and praise! How cheerful should be the spirit of the Christian! How sparkling his habitual disposition! How, running joyfully like the sun the course that God has appointed him, he like the sun should scatter gladness round his path; and, bright himself, should brighten every object he beholds! Christian, let your soul magnify the Lord, and your spirit rejoice in God your Saviour! Let none of the clouds of earth throw gloom upon your course. Outward things may come and go with creature

fickleness ; but you have in yourself a joy which no man intermeddleth with. And this joy is the pledge of constantly increasing blessedness through all eternity. Christ in you now is the assurance of glory hereafter. "Then shall the righteous *shine forth as the sun* in the kingdom of their Father." "The path of the just is as the shining light, WHICH SHINETH MORE AND MORE UNTO THE PERFECT DAY."

THE END.



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